



Commentary on Romans

“The Gospel of God”

Chapter 1

Verses 1-15

By

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“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.” Romans 1:1

The **Book of Romans** is the “mountain peak” of the Apostle Paul’s inspired Writings. This great Book demonstrates the Power of God over sin and the astonishing efficacy of His Grace. Romans is Paul’s triumphant exposition about the truly amazing Grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is through Romans that we learn about the sinfulness of sin and the Righteousness of God. We learn about the wrath of God revealed from Heaven against all sin. Paul writes about the extreme penalty for sin for all members of the human race and the extreme **payment** for sin by God’s Son, Jesus Christ. It is in Romans that we see the horror of sin and the honor of the sinless Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. God is the Judge of sin. Jesus is the Propitiation for that sin. We learn through Romans that God frees sinning slaves to become forgiven saints. God is Sovereign in all the universe and the Source of all Truth.

Romans has been studied and loved by millions of people for almost 2,000 years. Here is what some of those people have written about Romans through the centuries.

“This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian’s while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.” *Martin Luther*

“The whole Epistle is so methodical, that even its very beginning is framed according to the rules of art. As contrivance appears in many parts, which shall be noticed as we proceed, so also especially in the way in which the main argument is deduced: for having begun with the proof of his Apostleship, he then comes to the Gospel with the view of recommending it; and as this necessarily draws with it the subject of faith, he glides into that, being led by

the chain of words as by the hand: and thus he enters on the main subject of the whole Epistle justification by faith" *John Calvin*

"This epistle to the Romans is placed first, not because of the priority of its date, but because of the superlative excellency of the epistle, it being one of the longest and fullest of all, and perhaps because of the dignity of the place to which it is written." *Matthew Henry*

"The chief design of this epistle is to set in a clear light the doctrine of justification: showing against the Gentiles, that it is not by the light of nature, and works done in obedience to that, and against the Jews, that it was not by the law of Moses, and the deeds of that; which he clearly evinces, by observing the sinful and wretched estate both of Jews and Gentiles: but that it is by the righteousness of Christ imputed through the grace of God, and received by faith; the effects of which are peace and joy in the soul, and holiness in the life and conversation: he gives an account of the justified ones, as that they are not without sin, which he illustrates by his own experience and case; and yet are possessed of various privileges, as freedom from condemnation, the blessing of adoption, and a right to the heavenly inheritance; he treats in it concerning predestination, the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews; and exhorts to the various duties incumbent on the saints, with respect to one another, and to the world, to duties of a moral and civil nature, and the use of things indifferent; and closes it with the salutations of divers persons." *John Gill*

"This is St. Paul's *magnum opus*. Here we see him at his greatest as a constructive thinker and theologian. The Epistle to the Romans is the complete and mature expression of the apostle's main doctrine, which it unfolds in due order and proportion and combines into an organic whole. For the purposes of systematic theology it is the most important book in the Bible. More than any other, it has determined the course of Christian thought." *G.G. Findlay*

“In studying it [Romans] we find ourselves, at every word, face to face with the unfathomable.” *Frederic Louis Godet*

“No man verily can read it too oft or study it too well; for the more it is studied the easier it is, the more it is chewed the pleasanter it is, and the more groundly it is searched the preciouser things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein.” *William Tyndale*

“This is the greatest, in every sense, of the apostolic letters of Paul; in scale, in scope, and in its wonderful combination of doctrinal, ethical and administrative wisdom and power. In some respects the later Epistles, Ephesians and Colossians, lead us to even higher and deeper *arcana* of revelation, and they, like Romans, combine with the exposition of truth a luminous doctrine of duty. But the range of Romans is larger in both directions, and presents us also with noble and far-reaching discussions of Christian polity, instructions in spiritual utterance and the like, to which those Epistles present no parallel, and which only the Corinthian Epistles rival.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

To me, once a mocking atheist, the Book of Romans is a “soul feast” – dining on the most pure and perfect doctrinal delights. The man who led me to the doorway of God’s forgiveness through the great Sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ quoted from Romans as he explained the great Gospel of God. I learned from God through the writings of the Apostle Paul that I was hopelessly lost and desperately in need of salvation. I, like all other people on earth, was a sinner. I had sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. The Holy Spirit did His Work of convicting me of my sin, so I was ready to hear the Gospel of God.

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ

Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Romans 3:21-26

I was convicted and convinced by the Gospel of God, so I repented of my sin and asked for God's forgiveness. I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, was justified and redeemed, and received the righteousness of God. God passed over all the sins I had previously committed because of the shed Blood of Jesus Christ. God demonstrated His Righteousness to me and proved Himself to be "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." Praise God and Amen!

I am excited to share with you what God reveals about Himself and His Gospel in the Book of Romans. We are embarking on the most amazing journey together as we see sin and death, mercy and grace, love and forgiveness, and truth and life through the eyes of the Almighty God.

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.” Romans 1:1

Most biblical scholars accept as fact that the Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Romans. Among the small number of critical scholars who do not believe Paul wrote Romans, they mention Tertius being the writer because of Romans 16:22 – “I, Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, greet you in the Lord.” This is an insignificant argument based on the fact that Paul mentions himself clearly at the beginning of the letter and often within as the author and that Paul had help in the physical writing of other Letters by people employed as an *amanuensis* (one who writes from dictation or copies the work of another, a male secretary). Paul, who suffered problems with his eyesight, would often take the pen from his *amanuensis* and write a greeting with his own hand (e.g. 2 Thessalonians, 3:17; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18)

Paul’s Birth and Death

Paul was born a Roman citizen in Tarsus. The year of his birth is thought to be somewhere between 2 BC – 5 AD, while the year of his death is estimated to be somewhere between 66 – 68 AD. He was called “a young man” in Acts 7:58 at the murder of Stephen, which is thought to have been about 32 or 33 AD. The Greek word for “young man” is *neaniou*. It was used for men in the physical prime of their life, 25-40 years of age. Saul was not acting as one of the witnesses because he did not pick up a stone to throw at Stephen. In Acts 8:1, we see that Saul was “consenting” to Stephen’s death. The word is *suneudokon* and means “to approve of in a personal way, to think well of something, to take pleasure with others in something, to assent.” In Acts 8:3, we see that Saul “made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison.” Saul was a young man with a powerful position – most likely with the ruling Sanhedrin (see Acts 9:1-2). He was well known as a young Pharisee who was going to put a stop to the movement of people following Jesus as the crucified and resurrected Messiah.

Here's how Paul remembered the event years later when he was arrested in Jerusalem.

"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished ... in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him." Acts 22:3-5, 19-20

When Paul wrote to Philemon about Onesimus, he called himself "the aged," which is the Greek word *presbutes* – "elderly man." (Philemon 1:9) Paul wrote Philemon about 60 AD, so he would have been close to 60 years of age at the time. That doesn't seem "elderly" to us, but the Bible references the age of 60 years many times as being the beginning or point of being aged (Leviticus 27:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:9) In the census of Israelites for service, counting was made of men up to the age of 50 (Numbers 4). Concerning the cleansing and dedication of the Levites, God told Moses that the years men were to serve Him in the Tabernacle of Meeting was from 25 – 50 (e.g. Numbers 8:24-26). After the age of 50, the Levites were allowed to "minister" with their younger brethren in the Tabernacle, but "they themselves shall do no work."

When Jesus told the Jews that Abraham rejoiced to see His day, "and he saw it and was glad," the Jews said to Jesus, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" That's when Jesus replied with, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." (John 8:57-58) The Jews chose the age of 50 years because that was viewed as being an older man and their point to Jesus

was that He wasn't enough old enough to be called an older man, so how could He claim to have lived before Abraham. Christ's statement, to them, seemed ludicrous.

How did Gentiles view age? Military service ended at 60 for the amazing Spartans. Children began their training at the age of 7, but a man of 60 was no longer viewed as being an active warrior. Some of the "senior" men joined a ruling council of elders called the *Gerousia*. Ancient Greeks were taught as young adults to care for their "aged" parents. An "old man" was called a *geron*, while an "old woman" was called a *graia*. Older men were known as *geron* when they transferred control or authority in the household to their son(s). Older women were known as *graia* when they went through menopause. In ancient Rome people 60 years of age and older were called *senectus*, meaning "aged, old age, very old." People 46-60 were called *seniores* (senior) and were viewed as senior citizens of the time, in both age and position.

How did Paul die? We are not told specifically in Scripture, though Paul told Timothy he was "already being poured out as a drink offering" and that the time of his departure was "at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6). It's believed that Paul wrote 2 Timothy about 67 AD and died a short time later at the hands of executioners in Rome. Ignatius, a student of the Apostle John and pastor of the church in Antioch, wrote in the early 2nd century AD that Paul was martyred in Rome. Early Christian tradition claimed that Paul was beheaded near Rome during the mid-60s AD.

Tarsus, The Birthplace of Paul

Tarsus was a fascinating place to grow up during the 1st century AD. The city had a long history in the ancient world and became a favorite of the Hittites, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. Tarsus was located close to the Mediterranean Sea coast and was central to trade routes by land and sea. Tarsus was the largest city in Cilicia (now the Mersin Province of Turkey) and

became the capital city during the time of Roman military leader Pompey. Roman ruler Marc Antony made Tarsus a "free city" in 42 BC, just a year before his famous romantic meeting in Tarsus with Egyptian Queen Cleopatra. Caesar Augustus exempted the city from imperial taxation because his teacher and friend was from Tarsus.

A large number of Jews moved to Tarsus toward the end of the 1st century BC and received Roman citizenship. That's why Paul was able to tell a Roman military officer that he was a Roman by birth (Acts 22:25-29). Tarsus became a grand city under Roman rule. It had large marketplaces, palaces, roads, bridges, stadium, gymnasium, and public and private baths. Tarsus was also well known as a university city. Saul (Paul) had the unique opportunity of growing up in a city with people from many parts of the world with a wide variety of philosophical viewpoints.

Studying With Gamaliel

Before Paul was saved by Christ he was proud of being a Jew – "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5). Concerning the law, Paul said he had been "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6). Paul would have learned a great deal about the Jewish Law from his father and other elders in the Tarsus synagogue, but we also know that Paul studied for some time with a renowned expert in the Jewish Law by the name of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

Gamaliel was known as Gamaliel the Elder and Rabban Gamaliel. He was the son of Simeon ben Hillel and the grandson of Hillel the Elder. Jewish boys who wanted to study for legal careers in Jerusalem during the 1st century AD studied at the House of Hillel or the House of Shammai. Hillel and Shammai were two leading rabbis and represented opposing views on issues of Hebrew theology, ethics and ritual practices. Gamaliel was also a leading member of the Sanhedrin and helped save the lives of several of Christ's disciples by advising the ruling

council to “keep away from these men and let them alone” (Acts 5:38).

We will learn a great deal about Paul during our study of Romans, but suffice it to say at this point that he was well qualified in Christ to minister to both Jews and Gentiles and to write the Letter of Romans.

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God." Romans 1:1

Something amazing happened to Saul of Tarsus to turn him from an enemy of Christ to a "bondservant" of Christ. How long did it take? Less than a minute.

"Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. *It is hard* for you to kick against the goads.' So he, trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?' Then the Lord *said* to him, 'Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.'" Acts 9:1-6

Depending on what version of the Bible you use, you may not find the words "It *is hard* for you to kick against the goads.' So he, trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?" The reason is that some of the old Greek manuscripts of the Book of Acts don't contain the words, so the Majority Text (MT) doesn't include them. However, the Received Text (TR – Textus Receptus) does include them. So, what do we do with that? Look a little more deeply into the Book of Acts and we discover more evidence.

"Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' 'And those who

were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.'" Acts 22:6-10

Here is the same portion from one of the MT translations (NIV).

"About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. 'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. 'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'" Acts 22:6-10

Looking ahead four chapters, we see Paul speaking to King Agrippa.

"While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? *It is* hard for you to kick against the goads.' So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'" Acts 26:12-18

Here is the same portion from one of the MT translations (NIV).

“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’” Acts 26:12-18

By reading all of the accounts of Paul’s encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, even in various translations, we have as complete a picture as we can get from Divine revelation. We also learn that the Lord’s comment about it being hard for Paul to kick against the goads and Paul’s question “Who are You, Lord?” are definitely part of what happened between them.

Paul knew something astonishing had happened to him. He didn’t know what, but he knew it was not just another day at the office. Saul saw a light that was brighter than the sun. He fell to the ground and heard a Voice speaking to him in Hebrew asking why he was persecuting Him. Paul asked who was speaking to him and he heard the Voice say, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Paul said Jesus then told him to rise and stand on his feet because He had appeared to him to make him (Saul) a minister and a witness both of the things which he had seen and of the things Jesus would reveal to him. Jesus promised Saul that

He would deliver him from Jews and Gentiles, to whom He was sending him, for the purpose of turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who would be sanctified by faith in Christ.

What did Saul do with what Jesus told him? He spent three days without sight and didn't eat or drink. When Ananias came to Saul with a Message from Christ, it was confirmation of what he had heard personally from Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. Saul believed, was filled with the Holy Spirit, received his sight, arose, was baptized, ate some food, was strengthened, spent some days with the disciples at Damascus (the ones Saul planned to arrest and take back to Jerusalem), and "Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." (Acts 9:17-20). Saul was never the same again. He became a "bondservant" of Jesus Christ that day.

Did that have an impact on people around Saul? Yes, it did.

"Then all who heard were amazed, and said, 'Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?' But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ." (Acts 9:21-22)

Paul (Saul) used the Greek word *doulos* (in bondage, bondservant, slave) often to describe his relationship to Jesus Christ. How interesting that Paul would choose the term for a "slave" with no rights of their own to describe himself. *Doulos* was the lowest form of servitude in Greek culture and people who were slaves would not have thought highly of their lowly position. So, what did Paul think about being a *doulos* of Christ? Paul's concept of being a *doulos* of Christ came from Christ's own example of serving His Father.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made

Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:5-8

Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God Who is Equal with God, voluntarily took the form (*morphēn*) of a bondservant (*doulos*), came to earth in the likeness (*homoiomati*) of men, and being found in appearance (*schemati*) as a man, humbled Himself and became obedient to death on the Cross. That is our Example of being a "bondservant." No wonder it was a statement of great joy for Paul to say that he was a bondservant of Jesus Christ. Jesus had saved his eternal soul on that dusty road to Damascus. Jesus had purchased Paul's salvation at the price of His Own Life. Paul knew, understood, and gloried in that and was always excited to tell everyone that he was a *doulos* – a bondservant – of Jesus Christ.

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.” Romans 1:1

In this part of our study of the Book of Romans we'll see what's important about Paul being “called to be an apostle.”

The Greek words are *kletos apostolos* – literally “a called apostle.” *Kletos* is an adjective from the verb *kaleo*, “to call,” which has the idea of being invited to a particular office. That office was the noun *apostolos*.” Christians are used to hearing the term “apostle,” but the word is only a transliteration of *apostolos*. The word comes from *apo* (from) and *stello* (to send). The meaning of the word is someone who is sent with a commission. Ancient Greeks used the word to describe a person sent on a mission with credentials as a representative of another person (envoy) to carry out the orders of that person.

Paul presented himself boldly as having been called by Jesus Christ to be an official representative of God, fully credentialed by Christ for everything the Lord would order him to do. Think about that for a moment. Let the power of the meaning of those words sink into your mind and heart. Paul is not just another preacher, not just another writer, not just another Christian leader. Paul was called “Personally” by Christ Jesus to represent Him to the world. With this in mind, look again at how Jesus called Paul.

“While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? *It is* hard for you to kick against the goads.’ So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to

you. I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." Acts 26:12-18

Look at what Jesus "called" Paul to do.

1. Make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you
2. Deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you
3. To open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God
4. That they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me

Wow! What a calling – what a ministry Paul was to have. Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, called to Saul of Tarsus from Heaven to give him his marching orders. Can you imagine being the commander of one nation's army and being called by the king of the opposing army to become a commander in his army? How would you respond? Saul was "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1) when "the Lord" called him to become a leader of disciples. Saul was knocked to the ground and blinded and heard the Voice of God from Heaven. Saul obeyed and became Paul, "a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle."

Paul's **apostleship** is unique. Look at what the Apostle Peter said in Acts 1.

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 'Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit

spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.' (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.) 'For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.' 'Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.' And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, 'You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.' And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles." Acts 1:15-26

Peter said that it was vital the disciples of Christ chose someone to take the place of Judas Iscariot as an apostle. Judas had been "numbered" with the other apostles and had "obtained a part in this ministry." What was the number? **12.**

"And when He had called His twelve disciples to *Him*, He gave them power *over* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him." Matthew 10:1-4

Why 12 apostles and not two or ten or 20?

"Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.'" Matthew 19:27-29

The 12 Apostles will sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 Tribes of Israel. That's the reason for the number 12. It corresponds to God's future plan for judging Israel. The Holy Spirit made it clear immediately following Christ's Ascension to Heaven that 11 of the original apostles remained (Acts 1:12-14), but that they had to select one more to bring the number back to the number 12. The criteria for the person who would be added to the Lord's group of apostles was that he had accompanied the other apostles "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." Based on that criteria the disciples came up with two names: Barsabas, surnamed Justus, and Matthias. The disciples prayed for guidance: "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." The disciples cast their lots and Matthias was numbered with the 11 apostles. When the time comes for the Lord's apostles to judge the 12 Tribes of Israel, Matthias will be on one of the 12 thrones judging the Tribes. That's a high honor.

What was the ministry Matthias and the other apostles were called to do for the Lord? Judging the 12 Tribes is a future ministry. The first ministry Matthias and

the others were called to do was make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to do everything Christ had commanded them. (Matthew 28:19-20) The specifics of that ministry are clearly explained in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and the first several chapters of Acts. I say the first chapters of Acts because the ministry of the 12 apostles is not addressed much after Acts 10 and not at all after Acts 15. Once the leaders of Israel rejected the apostles' message of the Messianic Kingdom of Jesus Christ, the Lord turned to a new apostle and something He had hidden from the "12" Jewish apostles.

There is no question that Jesus Christ called Paul (Saul of Tarsus) to be an apostle. We read in Acts 9 that Paul was Christ's "chosen vessel" to bear His Name "before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." The Book of Acts refers to Paul as an "apostle" (e.g. Acts 14:4, 14). Paul referred to himself many times as an "apostle" of Jesus Christ (e.g. Romans 1:1, 5; 11:13; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 4:9; 9:1-2, 5; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 12:11-12; Galatians 1:1, 17; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:6; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:1, 11; Titus 1:1).

If that's not enough proof of Paul's apostleship, the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Peter to write in his last letter before death about the special position of the Apostle Paul.

"Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures." 2 Peter 3:14-16

So, why wasn't Paul numbered with the 12? Why won't Paul sit on one of the 12 thrones judging the 12 Tribes of Israel? For one thing, Paul didn't meet the criteria of being one of the "12" apostles. He had not accompanied the other apostles all the the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, "beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." We know from the timeline that Paul was most likely living in Jerusalem at the time John the Baptist was baptizing and Jesus was teaching and healing in Israel, and that he was old enough to be included as an apostle (based on the age of the Apostle John). So, why didn't Peter and the other disciples consider Saul of Tarsus to be the 12th apostle? Why didn't the Holy Spirit instruct them to send someone to find Saul and bring him to the meeting before Pentecost so they could vote on him as well? Simple. Paul did not qualify. He could never qualify for being an apostle of Christ as explained by Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Saul was not a believer in Christ at the time of Christ's Ministry on earth. In fact, Saul became the chief enemy and persecutor of the followers of Christ in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and Syria after Stephen's martyrdom. There's no way Paul could have been the 12th apostle.

I share this because there are many people who teach that Peter and the apostles made a mistake choosing Matthias as the 12th apostle. Their theory is that Peter made his decision to choose a replacement for Judas Iscariot in the "flesh" and should have waited for Christ to call Saul of Tarsus so that he (Paul) could be selected as the 12th apostle. The fact is it didn't happen because that's not what God had planned for Paul or the unsaved Gentile world.

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.” Romans 1:1

During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus chose 12 men to be His apostles. He told them they would one day sit on 12 thrones and judge the 12 Tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). After the death of Judas Iscariot the Holy Spirit led the remaining 11 Apostles to choose someone to replace Judas as the 12th Apostle. That person had to have accompanied the apostles “all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” (Acts 1:21-22) The Apostles chose Matthias. How many other men were chosen to become Apostles according to the requirements the Holy Spirit gave them? None. Look through the Book of Acts and the letters of those men who were Apostles of Christ “beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us” and you will not find one new Apostle added to the 12. Not one. That’s because 12 is the number God chose for the Tribes of Israel and 12 is the number of Apostles Jesus chose to sit on the thrones to judge the 12 Tribes. The number did not and will not change. Ever. Period.

One other area of note is that the names of the 12 Apostles will be etched in the 12 foundations of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14), after the Lord Jesus Christ deals with Satan and judges the dead from His great White Throne (Revelation 20) and creates a new Heaven and new Earth (Revelation 21). One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues took John in the Spirit in a great and high mountain to show him “the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” Who or what did the angel show John? “... the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God” (Revelation 21:10-11). John saw that the “holy Jerusalem” will have a great and high wall with 12 gates and 12 angels at the gates. The names written on the gates “are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel; three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on

the west" (Revelation 21:12-13). If you're interested in seeing which of the names of the 12 Tribes of Israel go on which gates, look at how God designed the location of the Tribes around the Tabernacle (Numbers 2). Look at which tribes were on the east, north, south, and west, then look again at Revelation 21.

"Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." This is a permanent listing on the foundations of the New Jerusalem. Why only the names of the 12 Apostles who left the small upper room on Pentecost to preach the Messiah's Kingdom offer to Israel? Because the New Jerusalem is connected to Israel, not Gentiles. But, you say, there are other apostles named in the Book of Acts and the letters of the Apostle Paul. If there could be only 12 Apostles, how is Paul listed in the Bible as an Apostle? Apostle of what?

I'm glad you asked because that is one of the most important questions the Church should ask and answer. Followers of Christ are often referred to as members of a "flock," as in a flock of sheep, and leaders are often called "shepherds." That's for a good reason.

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd." John 10:16

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." Acts 20:28-29

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of

glory that does not fade away.” 1 Peter 5:2-4

Sheep tend to wander and are easily separated by enemies. Just look at the Church today. Are we sheep or what? Christians have taken the Lord’s prayer that we all be one even as Jesus is One with the Father (John 17:20-21) and made a mockery of it. Christianity is known not by the oneness of its members, but by divisions and disunity. No wonder we struggle to live up to our Lord’s deep desire for us. The liberating concept of one people following Jesus Christ in continual unity has become thousands of different groups of people clamoring and claiming to be the Church. The fact is we’ve missed God’s signposts that are right under our noses! No wonder unbelievers have little interest in becoming believers. The Church has missed the primary point of being the “Body of Jesus Christ.”

The New Testament is laid out well for our understanding. The Gospel accounts (Matthew – John) are followed by the Book of Acts, which is followed by Paul’s Letters, which are followed by the Letters of James, Peter, John, and Jude. Keep in mind that the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of these Bible Books and guided how it would be presented to the world.

Much of what we see in Scripture is the “finger” of God pointing us to His Truth. God points when He’s ready and that has always been the perfect time. God pointed and His Son came into the world as a baby born to a virgin. God pointed and John the Baptist “prepared the way of the Lord.” God pointed and Jesus Christ preached, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15) God pointed and Jesus died on the Cross. God pointed and Jesus rose from the dead. God pointed and His Spirit fell on the 120 in Jerusalem. God pointed and the Apostle Peter preached to Jews in Jerusalem that they should repent and “be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” (Acts 2:38) God pointed and Jesus called His enemy Saul of Tarsus to be “a chosen vessel” of the Lord to bear His Name “before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” (Acts 9:15) None of these were

determined, decided or directed by men. God pointed and it was done.

God's fingerprint on events in the Bible becomes a signpost to anyone who has eyes to see. The signpost of Paul's unique apostleship is a huge "flag" that stands waving in the middle of the Book of Acts. That flag is the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 where Paul stood up for his calling to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles unhindered by the calling of the 12 Apostles to the Jews. Here's how Paul explained what happened.

"Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with *me*. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus who *was* with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed *to be something* added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised *was* to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that *we should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. *They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do."

Galatians 2:1-10

Do you see it? Paul and Barnabas, backed up by Peter, stood up to the accusations of false brethren “that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” What Paul is writing about to the Galatians is the “truth of the gospel.” The “truth” of the Gospel is that Jesus committed the “gospel for the uncircumcised” to Paul and the “gospel for the circumcised” to Peter. So, what happened when the leaders realized what the Lord Jesus had done? “... when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that *we should* go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” Paul had a unique ministry to Gentiles, while the 12 Apostles had a unique ministry to Jews. That’s important to see because it impacts our understanding of what God was doing then, has been doing for 20 centuries, and is doing now.

Also, notice that after the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 we don’t read again about the ministries of the 12 Apostles. We know that Peter, James and John continued to minister to the circumcised, but the Holy Spirit did not inspire Luke to mention them again (other than a brief mention of James when Paul visited him in Jerusalem – Acts 21). The second half of the Book of Acts is all about Paul’s going to the Gentiles and how Jews conspired to kill him. So simple, yet most Christians have missed the clear signs that the Holy Spirit placed in His Inspired Word for all of us to see.

The first sign that everyone should see clearly is what we saw Jesus tell Ananias about Saul of Tarsus – “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” Notice the first emphasis of our Lord is on “Gentiles.” The children of Israel are mentioned last. Paul, who was a Jew, called himself “an apostle to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13), “a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ *and* not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (1 Timothy 2:7), and “a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Timothy 1:11). Paul knew what Jesus had appointed him to do and he was not going to let anyone, even the 12 Apostles, tell him to do otherwise.

That does not mean Paul had nothing to do with the 12 Apostles or didn't care about them. We see in his writings and actions a deep burden for the Jews in Israel. In Romans 9 Paul wrote of great sorrow and continual grief in his heart for people he called "my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites." Paul spearheaded the collection of money and gifts from Gentile believers to deliver to Jewish believers in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9). He cared deeply for those of the circumcision, but knew God had called him to a special ministry to the uncircumcision.

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.” Romans 1:1

Paul was the senior Apostle to the Gentiles, but not the only one. There are other men identified in Scripture as apostles who were not part of the 12 Apostles to the Jews. Who were they and what did they do?

It's clear from Matthew 1 thru Acts 11 that every usage of the words “apostle” or “apostles” was for the 12 Apostles to the Jews. However, usage after that is more than likely describing the Apostles to the Gentiles.

“But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles.” Acts 14:4

We have to look at the context to identify the apostles in Acts 14. It's important to remember that Luke did not write Acts with chapter and verse divisions. Acts is one continuous account of what God did through both the Apostles to the Jews and the Apostles to the Gentiles. The context of Acts 14 is about what God did through the Apostles to the Gentiles. The Jewish apostles are nowhere to be found in this context. Here's what happened that led to what we just read in Acts 14.

“On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’ Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the

region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

Paul and Barnabas told the Gentiles and Jews at Antioch in Pisidia that the Lord had commanded them to be a light to the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas left Antioch and traveled to Iconium where they preached the Gospel to Gentiles and Jews ("a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed." Acts 14:1). It was a difficult ministry for Paul and Barnabas. Unbelieving Jews stirred up many Gentiles and "and poisoned their minds against the brethren" (Acts 14:2). Paul and Barnabas remained in Iconium for a long time speaking boldly in the Lord, Who "was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:3).

The next verse is the first time we see anyone other than the 12 Jewish apostles called **apostles** – "But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles." It is clear from the context that the "apostles" mentioned here were Paul and Barnabas, not the Twelve from Judea. That is one of those important "flag" words we look for in Scripture. God inserted Himself into the process He started with apostleship many years earlier and made a big change. He would have apostles who would preach to the Jews in Judea and apostles who would preach to Jews and Gentiles outside of Judea.

Some of the unbelieving Gentiles and Jews in Iconium, with their rulers, attempted to abuse and stone Paul and Barnabas. They became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, where they preached the Gospel. (Acts 14:5-7) Paul was preaching in Lystra one day when he saw a cripple who was observing him intently. Paul knew the man had faith to be healed, so he said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" The man leaped to his feet

and walked. (Acts 14:8-10) What did the people do when they witnessed this miracle? They raised their voices in the Lycaonian language and said, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” (Acts 14:11) They called Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus brought oxen and garlands to the gates of the city “intending to sacrifice with the multitudes” (Acts 14:13). The next verse gives us absolute confirmation that Barnabas was called to be an “apostle.”

“But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.’ And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.” Acts 14:14-18

It’s interesting to see that Barnabas’ name is mentioned first here as an “apostle.” Remember that Barnabas was a follower of Christ long before Paul (Acts 4:36-37). Barnabas was the man God used to introduce Paul to the 12 Apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27) and to bring Paul many years later to the church in Antioch at Syria to minister to the Gentiles and Jews who worshiped together there (Acts 11:25-26). What we read in Acts 14:14 may be God’s way of reminding us of the special ministry He had given to Barnabas. What a special brother Barnabas was in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We know little about what happened to Barnabas after he and Paul went in different directions. The Book of Acts is silent about Barnabas’ ministry after that. Paul mentioned Barnabas in three of his Epistles: 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Colossians. The only negative thing he mentioned about Barnabas was in

Galatians 2 where he wrote that Barnabas was carried away with the hypocrisy that followed the visit of the Jews from Jerusalem to the church in Antioch, Syria. Church tradition has included many stories about Barnabas, including his founding of the Cypriot Orthodox Church and writing the Book of Hebrews and the Epistle of Barnabas. What we know for sure from Scripture is that Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus (Acts 15:39) for the purpose of ministry.

The 12 Apostles are mentioned again in Acts 15 and 16 as part of the important council at Jerusalem where they agreed that God had called them to preach the Gospel to the circumcision and God had called Paul and Barnabas to preach the Gospel to the uncircumcision. It's important to observe in all but one of the verses in Acts 15 and 16 that the 12 Apostles are identified as being with "the elders." The term "elders" was used at that time to speak of the Jewish leaders who served with the 12 Apostles in the ministry to the circumcision in Jerusalem and Judea. The 12 Apostles were tied directly to what God was doing in Jerusalem and Judea through the offer of the Messiah returning to rule and reign on the throne of David. Israel rejected Christ's offer and God set them aside to reach the Gentile world through a plan He revealed to the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 3).

The next mention of "apostles" in Scripture is in Romans 16.

"Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me."

Romans 16:7

The question for counting Andronicus and Junia among the apostles is whether the phrase "who are of note among the apostles" means that Andronicus and Junia were "among the apostles" or were "of note" among the apostles. We look to language, usage and intent to determine the correct meaning. Here's the language - *oitines eisin episemoi en tois apostolois*. The word *episemoi* - "of note" - means "stamped, marked, bearing a mark, of note, illustrious, thought

well of, distinguished, eminent.” The word is used only in Romans 16:7 (used in the positive sense – “notable”) and Matthew 27:16 (used in the negative sense – “notorious”). The words *en tois apostolois* – “among the apostles” – mean they were “notable, well-thought of, distinguished,” in the sphere of the apostles. Usage of *en tois* can mean they were notable as apostles or notable in the circle of apostles.

Andronicus and Junia are each mentioned only one time in Scripture—here in Romans 16—so we’re not able to learn more about them from another portion of Scripture. The name **Andronicus** is masculine. The name **Junia** (*Iouinian* - also translated Junias) is feminine. It could be that Andronicus and Junia were married and ministering together – thus the idea of their having a good reputation with the apostles. Others argue that the name Junias can also be used for a man and may identify both Andronicus and Junias as men who shared in the calling of apostleship with Paul and Barnabas. Paul pointed to their being his “countrymen” and “fellow prisoners,” which might point to both being men. They both were Jewish and may have been members of the Tribe of Benjamin, as was Paul. They apparently served time in prison, which is where Paul may have met them. Paul said they were “in Christ” before him, which indicates they became followers of Jesus Christ prior to Paul’s salvation.

Silas (Latin – Silvanus) was most likely an apostle to the Gentiles. After having sharp words with Barnabas about John Mark, Paul chose Silas to travel with him on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:40). Silas was a prophet from Jerusalem (Acts 15:27, 32) and preached alongside of Paul for a long time. Paul included Silas in the introduction to 1 Thessalonians (verse 1) and most likely included him as an “apostle” in 2:6:

“But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God *is* witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either

from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God." 1 Thessalonians 2:4-9

The last mention of Silas in Acts is in the 18th chapter: "When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus is the Christ.*" (Acts 18:5) We are not told what happened to Silas after that. Paul finished his second missionary journey with Priscilla and Aquila, leaving them at Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19). He then traveled to Caesarea and Antioch at Syria and spent time with his friends there. Paul began his third missionary journey after that, but Silas is not mentioned as traveling with him. We do know that Silas was a friend of the Apostle Peter and served as his scribe (1 Peter 5:12).

We know from Scripture that Silas was a strong believer with special gifts for the ministries God gave him. In Acts 15:22, Silas is called one of the "leading men among the brethren." We know from Acts 15:32 that Silas was a prophet and "exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words." We know from Acts 16 that Silas was a man of faith and not afraid to face danger and prison for doing the Lord's work. In 2 Corinthians 1:18-20 we see Silas (Silvanus) preaching that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We know from 1 Peter 5:12 that the Apostle Peter considered Silas a "faithful brother." Silas is a special brother in Christ who we will meet one day in Heaven.

Timothy traveled with Paul and Silas during Paul's second missionary journey and was also with him during Paul's third missionary journey. Timothy was included in the introduction to 1 Thessalonians and mentioned as "apostles of Christ." Paul also called Timothy – "my fellow worker" (Romans 16:21), "my beloved and faithful son in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:17), "he does the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 16:10), "*our* brother" (2 Corinthians 1:1), "bondservants of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:1), "For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state" (Philippians 2:20), "our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ" (1 Thessalonians 3:2), "a true son in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2), "a beloved son" (2 Timothy 1:2). High praise indeed from such a one as the Apostle Paul.

We know from Scripture that Timothy spent time teaching and guiding local churches. In 1 Corinthians 4:17 we see that Paul sent Timothy to the church in Corinth to remind them of Paul's "ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." We know from Philippians 2:19 that Paul intended to send Timothy to the church in Philippi so that he (Paul) "may be encouraged when I know your state." We know from 1 Thessalonians 3:1-7 that Paul sent Timothy to the church in Thessalonica to "establish" and "encourage" the believers in their faith and that Timothy brought Paul good news about their faith and love. We know from 1 Timothy 1 that Paul urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus, "that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith." (1 Timothy 1:3-4) Paul mentioned in 1 Timothy 4 that Timothy was still a young minister at the time ("Let no one despise your youth"). Paul encouraged Timothy to be an example to believers in word, conduct, love, spirit, faith, and purity. Paul told Timothy to give attention to reading, exhortation and doctrine, and not neglect the gift he had from a prophetic laying on of hands by the eldership. Paul told Timothy to meditate on those things, give himself entirely to them, take heed to himself and to the doctrine, and continue in them. Timothy was a young bishop of the church in Ephesus and from what we read about him in Scripture, Timothy was a good

pastor to his flock. Timothy had a sensitive heart spiritually, knew God's Word well, and knew how to use it to comfort and encourage people. To Paul, the most important thing Timothy could do was protect what God had given him and stand his ground for truth. "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge— by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith." (1 Timothy 6:20-21)

It is believed that Paul's last written communication was to Timothy. Paul probably wrote 2 Timothy shortly before he was martyred in Rome. In the letter, we see how deeply Paul cared for Timothy and the church he pastored—a church that Paul started. I highly recommend 2 Timothy to all Christians to read. It's an amazing insight into the heart and mind of a man called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." 2 Timothy 4:6-8

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.” Romans 1:1

The gift of “apostle” was God’s idea – “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles.” Jesus Christ gave (*edoken*) gifts (*domata*) to His Church and the first one mentioned is “apostles” (*apostolous*). Can you think of anyone who might have a problem with that gift? Hmmmm. Maybe, Satan! Yes, Satan had a big problem with God’s gift of “apostles” to the Church. Apostles like Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy were a huge thorn in Satan’s side.

So, what’s a devil to do? Lie. Steal. Kill. Destroy. Counterfeit. That’s what the devil does. He makes up stuff to confuse the people of God and confuse them he does. Look at what Paul wrote about the problem of counterfeit apostles.

“Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it! For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. Even though *I am* untrained in speech, yet *I am* not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things. Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages *from them* to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep *myself*. As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this

boasting in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Do you see how Paul handled the problem of "false apostles" (*pseudapostoloi*) infiltrating the Corinthian church? He called them out – "deceitful workers" (*ergatai dolioi*), "transforming themselves into apostles of Christ." That's how you deal with the counterfeiter. Call him out – "For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light."

Jesus Christ made it abundantly clear how He wanted His churches to deal with false apostles — put them to the test.

"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary." Revelation 2:2-3

There is nothing wrong with putting people to the test (*epeirasas*) when they claim to be speaking for God. If they can't pass the test, they shouldn't be trusted or followed. We have 2,000 years of history to fall back on. The Church has made the same mistake over and over again opening their pulpits and pews to false preachers and teachers. Shame on Christians who don't put these people to the Lord's test. Someone claims to speak for God, test them. If they speak for God, they'll pass the test just

fine. What is that test, you ask?

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was. But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3

The test is simply this — love God, live God, believe God, trust God, follow God, preach God, teach God, know God, want God, defend God, boast God, glorify God in everything you do. Pass or fail—that’s the test.

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God." Romans 1:1

So far we've seen that Paul was a "bondservant" of Jesus Christ and "called to be an apostle." In this study we'll see that Paul was "separated to the gospel of God" and what that means. Was that just for Paul and other apostles? or is it something God wants to do with us?

aphorismenos eis euaggelion theou — "having been separated to the gospel of God"

The word "separated" is the perfect passive participle of *aphorizo*. The word combines *apo* (from) and *horizo* (to determine) and means "to mark off by bounds, to separate." *aphorismenos* is in the perfect tense, which means the action is completed and the results are continuing or in full effect. Another way of saying it is that the perfect tense is past action with present results that continue. *aphorismenos* is in the passive voice, which means something or someone separated Paul. It was not his choice (self-action). From what we've already learned about Paul, we know that Jesus Christ is the One Who "separated" him to the Gospel of God.

We often think of separation as being "from" something, but the words *aphorismenos eis* mean that Jesus separated Paul "to" something. That something is "the gospel of God." The Greek word *euaggelion* originally meant "a reward for good tidings," but later came to mean the "good tidings" itself. The old Anglo-Saxon equivalent, "godespell" or "godspell," was a combination of two words: "god" (God) and "spell" (tidings or story). The "godspell" was God's story, His message.

Paul used the word *euaggelion* more than 70 times in his letters—far more than any other writer in the New Testament. That's interesting in light of what we

learned about how Paul preached the “gospel for the uncircumcised” and Peter preached the “gospel for the circumcised.” Paul deeply emphasized the importance of the Gospel message that Christ gave him to preach.

“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:22-24

Can you see how “separated,” how “marked out” Paul was to the Gospel of the Grace of God? Nothing moved him. He did not count his own life dear to himself. He was determined to finish his race with joy, and the ministry the Lord Jesus had given him—“to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” Paul even referred to it as “my gospel” (Romans 2:16; 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8). The Gospel was extremely personal to Paul. He took ownership of the message and treated it as the most important part of his life.

When Paul wrote the Romans that he was “separated to the gospel of God,” he meant it. Paul was not lying, he was not exaggerating, he was not tricking anybody, he meant what he said—he had been “separated” to the Gospel of God. It’s what Paul lived for—what made him say what he said, do what he did, endure what he endured. Paul is someone to imitate (1 Corinthians 11:1) because he lived a life of pure separation to the will of God.

The Gospel is known as many things in Scripture. It’s called “the gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 4:23), “the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1), “the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14), “the word of the gospel” (Acts 15:7), “the gospel of His Son” (Romans 1:9), “the gospel of Christ” (Romans 1:16), “gospel of peace” (Romans 10:15; Ephesians 6:15), “Christ’s gospel” (2 Corinthians 2:12), “the gospel of your salvation” (Ephesians 1:13), “the

gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8), and "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Timothy 1:11).

Paul used the word "gospel" 13 times in his Epistle to the Romans. That's more than all of the uses of the word "gospel" in all of the other apostles' letters—combined. He begins by calling it "the gospel of God." That's where the "glad tidings" begin—with God. The Gospel is "good news" because it's what God is telling the world. It began with Genesis 1:1 ("In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.") and ends with Revelation 22:21 ("The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen."). God is doing great and mighty things from beginning to end—though there is no end to what God will do for those who belong to Him.

Paul used the phrase "gospel of God" five times; Peter used it once. It is the "parent" of all Gospel identities.

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God ..." Romans 1:1

"... that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:16

"Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge?" 2 Corinthians 11:7

"But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict." 1 Thessalonians 2:2

"So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we

preached to you the gospel of God.” 1 Thessalonians 2:8-9

“For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” 1 Peter 4:17

How precious is the **Gospel of God**. How wonderful it is that Jesus Christ separated Paul to preach, teach and write about the wonderful “good news” of God’s mercy and forgiveness. How marvelous that Paul stood strong and was not moved from his “separation” to the Gospel.

Now to our earlier question: “Was that just for Paul and other apostles? or is it something God wants to do with us?” What do you think? You’ve studied the Bible, you’ve seen what Jesus taught His followers. You’ve read what Peter, John and other apostles told the Jewish believers in Jerusalem and Judea. You’ve read what Paul told Gentile believers across the Greek and Roman world. What do you think? Is the work of sharing the Gospel just for “professional” ministers?

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians and mentioned that Euodia, Syntyche, Clement, and “the rest of my fellow workers” had “labored” with him “in the gospel.” In his letter to the Romans, Paul commended many of the people who had helped him in the ministry of the Gospel. They included Phoebe, Priscilla, Aquila, Epaenetus, Mary, Andronicus, Junia, Amplias, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, members of the household of Aristobulus, Herodion, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus, Asvncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes and “the brethren who are with them,” Philologus, Julia, Nereus, Olympas, “and all the saints who are with them.” (Romans 16) Paul told the Colossians about the service rendered by Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Justus, Epaphras, Luke, Demas, and Nymphas. (Colossians 4)

What I see in these and other epistles is a clear picture of everyone in the Church participating in the ministry of the Gospel of the Grace of God. We learn from Paul's letter to the Romans that all members of the Body of Christ have spiritual gifts (*charismata*) for the benefit of the Church. Paul told the Corinthians that in the realm of spiritual matters (*pneumatikon*) there are diversities of "gifts" (*charismaton*), "ministries" (*diakonion*), and "activities" (*energematou*). (Romans 12:1-6) With these widely diverse gifts, ministries and activities, the Holy Spirit does His unique Work of making known the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Body of Christ.

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many." 1 Corinthians 12:13-14

For what purpose?

"But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*." 1 Corinthians 12:24-26

Christians often think of the "Gospel" as preaching salvation to the lost, but the Gospel is actually "everything" about God's Message to the world. It includes Christ's Death and Resurrection, His Ascension to Heavenly Power and Glory, the Ministry of the Holy Spirit to the world, the preaching of salvation to the unsaved, the love and care Christians show each other as members of the same Body, and the eternal future we all have with our Lord and each other. The Gospel Message is the total Work of God in Heaven and on earth.

What part do you play in the Gospel of God? Play it well.

“... which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures
...” Romans 1:2

ho proepangellomai dia ton propheton autou en graphais hagiais – “which he promised beforehand through the prophets of him in writings holy”

The word “which” is a relative pronoun that points back to the words “gospel of God” in verse 1. The “gospel of God” is what “He” promised “before.” Who is He? The context of verses 2 and 3 are clear that it is **God the Father** Who promised – “which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This is a powerful and amazing statement. God the Father promised His “gospel” at a prior time (beforehand) “through” His **prophets** in the Holy Scriptures. The Greek word *proepangellomai* is translated “promised beforehand.” It’s in the middle voice and carries the idea of the “subject” of the promising of old through proclamation participating in the results of the action. The subject of the action had a vested interest in the outcome of the action. Think about that for a minute. Who proclaimed the Gospel beforehand? God. Who participated in the Gospel during Paul’s preaching of it? God. Thus, “the gospel of God.” It’s all of God!

The only “Scriptures” Paul could have referenced at that time were those that had already been canonized in the Hebrew Bible. The last “prophet” of God in the Hebrew Scriptures was **Malachi**, who lived during the 5th century BC. The first prophet was **Abraham**, who lived during the 20th and 19th centuries BC. Can we really find the “the gospel of God” in the writings of the Hebrew prophets hundreds of years before Jesus came to Earth to “preach” the Gospel?

The Apostle Paul was an expert in the Hebrew Scriptures. He had spent most of his childhood, youth and young adult years studying them; first with his parents, then moving from Tarsus to Jerusalem at about the age of 10 to study at one of the leading rabbinical schools in Israel (Acts 22:3). In addition to that expertise, Paul also learned directly from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-18) and was also

inspired by the Holy Spirit as he wrote his letters (1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). When Paul speaks about the Scriptures, I listen.

The first Hebrew prophet to preach the Gospel was Abraham (Genesis 20:7), but first God preached the Gospel to Abraham.

“Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” Galatians 3:7-9

Remember that the Apostle Paul was an expert in Hebrew Scriptures, was a direct student of Jesus Christ, and wrote as the Holy Spirit moved in him to write. Paul wrote, “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.” Where does the Hebrew Scripture say that?

“Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.' So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.” Genesis 22:15-

The “Lord” called to Abraham “out of heaven” and told him that in Abraham’s “seed” all the nations of the earth would be blessed “because” Abraham had obeyed God’s Voice. Read the full context of Genesis 22 and you’ll see that what Abraham obeyed was God’s command to take his only son Isaac to the land of Moriah and offer the boy there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains God would show him. Abraham obeyed, God provided another offering in Isaac’s place, and God promised to make a great and mighty nation from Abraham and bless all the nations of the earth “in him.”

Was that the first time God mentioned blessing all the nations of the earth in Abraham? No. Look at what God said several years before Abraham took Isaac to the mountains of Moriah.

“And the Lord said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.’” Genesis 18:17-19

This Gospel that would come about in Abraham’s “seed” was preached from the earliest times. In fact, it was proclaimed in the Garden of Eden centuries earlier by God Himself.

“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15

Who or what is this “seed” that is at the heart of the Gospel proclamation? We know that it is “seed” from the woman. We also know that it is Abraham’s “seed.” Let’s see if we can figure this out. The “seed” comes from Eve and Abraham. How can that be since Abraham lived hundreds of years after Eve died? We turn

to our expert in the Hebrew Scriptures for the answer.

"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ." Galatians 3:16

We have our answer: the promised Seed of Eve and Abraham is Jesus Christ. And, in case someone in Galatia or elsewhere might argue that the Law God gave Moses and Israel somehow annulled the Covenant God made with Abraham, Paul added this:

"And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise." Galatians 3:17-18

Paul had the God-given ability to make things crystal-clear. Who is Abraham's Seed? Christ. Did the Mosaic Law nullify the promise God made to bless all the nations of the world through Abraham's Seed? No. Questions asked and answered. I don't know how anything could be clearer than what Paul wrote for us to read.

Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." (Galatians 3:6) The key that unlocks the Gospel for everyone is "faith."

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God. By faith Sarah herself also received

strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore ... By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense." Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19

Faith in God's "promise" is how the Gospel works. It does not work by works. It does not work by obedience to the Law. It does not work just because we want it to work. It works because of the promise God made to Abraham almost 4,000 years ago.

“Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” Galatians 3:5-9

As we saw in the last part of our study in Romans, God “preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand.” Abraham knew the “gospel of God” and preached it himself. Did any other Hebrew prophet preach the Gospel before Jesus Christ? The Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 1:2** that God promised the Gospel of Jesus Christ beforehand through His “prophets” (plural). That should mean we can look through the Old Testament and find other prophets preaching the “gospel” centuries before Jesus Christ began His preaching ministry on earth. So, can we? Can we find other Hebrew prophets preaching the “gospel?”

Jesus gave us some insight about Old Testament prophets who spoke of Him – “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.” (Luke 13:28) Jesus spoke those words in the context of teachings about the Kingdom of God. As Jesus made clear from the beginning of His earthly ministry, He was “preaching the gospel of the kingdom.” (Matthew 4:23) Remember, every kingdom has a king. Who is the King of the Kingdom of God? King Jesus!

The Lord identified Abraham, Isaac and Jacob among the prophets. Go back to Genesis and read the words of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob again and see how they preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. What did Abraham say when God provided a sacrifice to take Isaac’s place? “And Abraham called the name of the

place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.’ (Genesis 22:14) What did God say to Abraham? “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Genesis 22:16-18) The Gospel of the Kingdom – God would provide the Sacrifice and bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham’s Seed.

We learn in the Book of Hebrews that Isaac and Jacob were heirs of the same promise that God had made to Abraham. “By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” (Hebrews 11:9-10) That promise was the future Kingdom of Christ. Here’s how the Lord revealed it to Jacob as he was traveling to Padan Aram to take a wife.

“I *am* the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.” Genesis 28:13-15

Jacob was the father of 12 sons who became the 12 Tribes of Israel. One of his sons was named Judah. Jesus was born into the Tribe of Judah and is called “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” in Revelation 5:5. Here’s how Jacob preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of Christ to his sons just before he died.

“Judah, you *are he* whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s children shall bow down before you. Judah *is* a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes *are* darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk.”
Genesis 49:8-12

One of the greatest Hebrew prophets was Moses. He preached volumes about the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The Apostle included Moses in one of his sermons about Christ.

“But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be *that* every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant

which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities." Acts 3:18-26

Notice that Peter said the same thing as Paul about the prophets preaching the Gospel. "... that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Peter bore hard into the hearts and minds of the Israelites in Jerusalem on that day long ago when he told them, "Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities."

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 1:1-3

God has made many promises to people through the centuries, most of them through His spokespeople (prophets). God's promises were often in the form of future blessings. He promised blessings to Noah and his descendants – "So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.'" (Genesis 9:1) He promised blessings to Abraham and his descendants – "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:2-3)

So, what does this have to do with Jesus? Everything! All spiritual blessings flow through Jesus. That's what the prophets foretold.

"But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be *that* every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed

all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities.” Acts 3:18-26

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Samuel was one of Israel’s greatest prophets. He was a prophet, priest, judge, and kingmaker – an unusual combination. In fact, Samuel is in a class of his own in Israel’s long history. In speaking to the prophet Jeremiah about Israel centuries after Samuel, God said, “*Even* if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind *would not be* favorable toward this people. Cast *them* out of My sight, and let them go forth.” (Jeremiah 15:1) That’s how special Samuel was to God that He would include Samuel in the same breath with Moses.

The prophecies concerning Samuel and Jesus began with Hanna, Samuel’s mother. This is part of her prayer when she brought Samuel to the Tabernacle to serve God with Eli, Israel’s chief priest.

“The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces; From heaven He will thunder against them. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. ‘He will give strength to His king, And exalt the horn of His anointed.’ 1 Samuel 2:10

This prayer/prophecy is interesting on several levels – one being that Israel did not have a king at that time, and, in fact, had never had a king. Israel had been ruled by judges, but not by a human king. Another is the fact that Israel at that time was certainly not one of the great nations of the earth. So, for the mother of Samuel to say that God would thunder from Heaven against His adversaries, break them in pieces, judge the ends of the earth, give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His “anointed” (*masyiah* – messiah), was certainly a very big thing for a little Jewish mother to pray in front of Israel’s chief priest at the Lord’s Tabernacle.

Jews today, and for the last 20 centuries, have denied that Jesus is the Messiah because they say He did not fulfill all the Messianic prophecies. What Jews have missed is what Peter preached in Acts 3: “But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.”

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in his prophetic office, said that Jesus fulfilled what God had foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ (Messiah) would suffer. Did Jesus fulfill all of the prophecies about the Messiah’s sufferings? Let’s take a look.

[Keep in mind that many prophets spoke these prophecies over a period of hundreds of years. The first Scripture listed below is Old Testament prophecy about Messiah. The Scripture next to it is New Testament fulfillment of that prophecy.]

1. Messiah betrayed by friend ... Psalm 55:12-14 – Matthew 26:59-60
2. Messiah sold for 30 pieces of silver ... Zechariah 11:12 — Matthew 26:14-15
3. Silver cast to the potter ... Zechariah 11:13 — Matthew 27:5-7
4. Messiah’s followers scattered ... Zechariah 13:7 — Matthew 26:56

5. Messiah accused by false witnesses ... Psalm 35:11 — Matthew 26:59-60
6. Messiah beaten and spit upon ... Isaiah 50:6 — Matthew 27:30
7. Messiah did not answer His accusers ... Isaiah 53:7 — Matthew 27:12-14
8. Messiah pierced, chastened, scourged ... Isaiah 53:5 — Matthew 27:26-29
9. Messiah was weak and His knees gave out ... Psalm 109:24 — John 19:17
10. Messiah's hands and feet are pierced ... Psalm 22:16 — Luke 23:33
11. Messiah was numbered with transgressors ... Isaiah 53:12 — Mark 15:27-28
12. Messiah prayed for those who persecuted Him ... Isaiah 53:12 — Luke 23:34
13. Messiah saw onlookers wag their heads at Him ... Psalm 109:25 — Matthew 27:39
14. Messiah was ridiculed by onlookers and persecutors ... Psalm 22:8 — Matthew 27:41-43
15. Messiah was stared at by onlookers and persecutors ... Psalm 22:17 — Luke 23:35
16. Messiah's family and friends stood at a distance ... Psalm 38:11 — Luke 23:49
17. Messiah's garments were divided and lots were cast for clothing ... Psalm 22:18 — John 19:23-24
18. Darkness blotted out the sun during the Messiah's crucifixion ... Amos 8:9 — Matthew 27:45
19. Messiah cried out about God forsaking Him ... Psalm 22:1 — Matthew 27:46
20. Messiah was given gall and vinegar ... Psalm 69:21 — John 19:28-29
21. Messiah committed His spirit to God ... Psalm 31:5 — Luke 23:46
22. Messiah's bones were out of joint, his heart was broken, and his side was pierced ... Psalm 22:14; Zechariah 12:10 — John 19:34-37
23. Messiah's bones were not broken ... Psalm 34:20 — John 19:33-36

24. Messiah was buried in the tomb of a rich man ... Isaiah 53:9 — Matthew 27:57-60

Peter was right! Jesus did fulfill all of the prophecies about Messiah's suffering. However, Peter did not say that Jesus fulfilled **all** of the prophecies concerning Israel's Messiah – just those that pertained to His suffering. What Peter said next is important for Jews to see and understand.

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”

Jesus fulfilling the Messianic prophecies about establishing Israel as the greatest nation on earth was based on the people of Israel repenting and being converted, that their sins would be blotted out, “so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” That did not happen. Instead of repenting and being converted, Israel persecuted and killed those who believed in Messiah. Israel's rejection then and for the last 2,000 years has kept God from sending Jesus back to Israel, but the day is coming (most likely very soon) when Jesus will return and then all of Israel and the world will know He is Messiah!

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” Romans 1:1-2

What did Paul refer to when he wrote about the “Holy Scriptures?” Paul used the word “Scripture” 15 times in his letters, and Luke used the word in reference to Paul’s ministry four times in the Book of Acts. So, what “scriptures” did they mean?

Paul referred to the Scriptures twice in his letters as “holy” – Romans 1:2 and 2 Timothy 3:15. What does that mean when placed before the word “Scriptures?” Let’s see what God has for us today.

Paul and Luke used the Greek word *graphe* for “Scriptures,” which means “writing.” Paul gives us a clue in Romans 1 that the writings he was referring to were the “holy” writings of God’s prophets who spoke of the “gospel of God.” The Greek word for holy is *hagios* and means “separated to.” It comes from *hazo*, which means “to venerate.” The Greeks used the word *hagios* for things that were sacred because they were purposely separated to the service of the gods.

The Romans, both Greeks and Jews, would have understood Paul to be referring to the Hebrew Scriptures that had been set apart by God for sacred use and contained the words of His prophets. He made that clear throughout his letter by references to the Jewish Law:

“Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law ...” Romans 2:17-18

“What advantage then has the Jew, or what *is* the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.” Romans 3:1-2

It's important to remember when reading the New Testament that it did not exist when Paul wrote the Christians in Rome. The inspired writings of the New Testament were finished by the end of the 1st century AD, but the 27 Writings that make up the New Testament were not finalized and codified until later. So, when we read the word "Scripture" in the New Testament it always refers to the Old Testament Writings.

The *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible) was originally written in Hebrew, but the *Torah* (Teachings – often referring to the writings of Moses) was translated into Greek during the 3rd century BC because most Jews living outside Israel spoke Greek instead of Hebrew. That happened during the centuries following the great *diaspora* (scattering) of the Jewish people from Judea in the 6th century BC. More Books of the *Tanakh* were translated into Greek and added to the Septuagint during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, so most of the people Paul ministered to during his travels would have used the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible). That may have included the Jews who lived in Rome, though some may have had access to a Hebrew Bible.

The Apostle relied heavily on the Scriptures as he made the case for Christ in the mid-1st century AD. Convincing Jews and Greeks that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah and Savior of the world was of utmost importance to Paul and he relied on the Scriptures to prove God's point. In fact, Paul (Saul) began preaching that message immediately after he was saved.

"Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, 'Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?' But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ." Acts 9:20-22

Paul continued to preach Christ from the Scriptures as his ministry expanded (e.g. Acts 13:16-41; 17:1-4). No other writer of the New Testament quoted the Old Testament more than Paul. The letter to the Romans is a good example.

“For ‘the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,’ as it is written.” Romans 2:24

“Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.” Romans 3:4

“As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.’” Romans 3:10-11

“For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Romans 4:3

“As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’” Romans 8:36

“As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.” Romans 9:13

“For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’” Romans 9:17

“As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’” Romans 9:33

“For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’” Romans 10:11

“And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’” Romans 10:15

"God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life?'" Romans 11:2-3

"Just as it is written: 'God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.'" Romans 11:8

"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.'" Romans 11:26-27

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance *is* Mine, I will repay," says the Lord." Romans 12:19

"For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God.'" Romans 14:11

"For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.'" Romans 15:3

So, what did Paul believe about the purpose of the Scriptures?

"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Romans 15:4

Hope. That's what Paul preached. Eternal Hope in Christ. The Scriptures spoke powerfully about the hope of Christ and it was Paul's mission in life to make sure that the world heard – and hear it did.

"And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, but as it is written: 'To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not

heard shall understand.” Romans 15:20-21

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, *and* declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Romans 1:1-4

The good news (Gospel) the Old Testament prophets spoke about concerned “His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” So much is said in just those six words.

First, we see that Jesus is “His Son.” The Greek reads *tou huiou autou* – “the Son of him.” I am very proud of my sons and love them deeply. The father-son relationship is a very special human connection, but what must it be like for God? God the Father and God the Son have an eternal connection; they’ve loved each other forever!

This fact is very helpful for understanding life because life is about the relationship of God the Father and God the Son. We humans are so busy trying to live life that we go through it without knowing its meaning. Even when it comes to God and salvation we think it’s about us. It’s not. It’s about the Father’s love for the Son and the Son’s love for the Father. The sooner we understand that, the sooner we can learn how to live life to the fullest.

Jesus’ love for God the Father is obvious as you read the Gospel accounts. And it’s not just the love that comes from respect that a son is expected to have for his father. It’s a love that comes from deep admiration and commitment. Our Lord’s love for His Father is very personal, but He shares that relationship with those who obey His will.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*." John 1:18

"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand." John 3:35

"And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?'" Luke 2:49

"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*." Matthew 11:27

"For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:50

"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me." John 5:30

"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.' Having said this, He breathed His last." Luke 23:46

Jesus wants everyone to love, honor, and obey His Father as much as He does.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.’ Amen.”
Matthew 28:18-20

“ And He said, ‘Abba, Father, all things *are* possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You *will*.” Mark 14:36

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” John 4:23

“Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.” John 5:19

“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life *to them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” John 5:19-23

Jesus points to His Father as the highest example of righteousness and good in the universe.

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He

makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:44-45

"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:48

"At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.'" Matthew 11:25-26

"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." Luke 6:36

Jesus wants us to have a rich and rewarding relationship with God the Father.

"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." Matthew 6:6

"Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Matthew 6:8-13

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" Matthew 7:11

"And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you." Luke 12:29-31

“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.” Matthew 16:27

Jesus made it clear during His earthly ministry that He had come in His Father’s Name (John 5:43). That meant more 2,000 years ago than it means now. When a first-born son came “in the name” of his father, he came with the full authority and power of his father. Jesus came in His Father’s Name to carry out the will of His Father. He spoke for His Father. What He did was for His Father. Everything Jesus did was about His Father.

As Paul wrote the Romans, he had been separated to the Gospel of God “which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” As Jesus told the people of Israel, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.” (John 5:46) Everything – **everything** – the prophets wrote in the Holy Scriptures concerns God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. That is Paul’s theme in his Letter to the Romans.

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, *and* declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Romans 1:1-4

Paul used the phrase "Jesus Christ our Lord" more than 50 times in his letters. The Greek is *Iesou Christou tou kuriou hemon*. The names "Jesus," "Christ," and "Lord" all have a wonderful history of usage in the Bible, but before we look at that I want to focus for just a minute on the word "our."

Being a follower of Jesus Christ was an extremely personal relationship for Paul. That may seem like a normal thing for a Christian to think and say, but it's a strange phenomenon to non-Christians. They can understand having personal feelings for someone you can see and touch, but not so much a Christian's strong love and devotion for someone they cannot see or touch. Some non-Christians believe that Jesus was an historical figure, but why would anyone have a personal attachment with a dead person that would cause them to talk with Him, pray to Him, confess to Him, and sing to Him? There's a very good reason for this.

Christians are not in love with a dead person. The Person we love is alive! Jesus "was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification." (Romans 4:25) Christianity is a "personal" faith because our faith is in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You might say that the Apostle Paul had an "extreme" view of the love of God in Christ.

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39

One of the things I love about Paul is that he was a well-trained Pharisee and Hebrew scholar whose life was revolutionized by meeting Jesus Christ. Paul's training would have prepared him for a lifetime of separation from unholy people and things, a dedication to the authenticity of the Hebrew Scriptures, and a passion for protecting Judaism.

“Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” Acts 9:1-2

This well-trained Pharisee and Hebrew scholar would never have spoken of Jesus as “our Lord” if his life had not been turned upside right by his personal encounter with Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

“As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It *is* hard for you to kick against the goads.’ So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord *said* to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’ Acts 9:3-6

The Greek word for “Lord” is *Kurios*, which is a translation of the Hebrew word *Adonai*. Both words carry the idea of authority and ownership. God is Lord (*Adonai*) and Jesus is Lord (*Kurios*). Paul understood when he called Jesus “Lord” that he was speaking about Him in the same sense as God Who is Lord.

The name “Jesus” comes from the Hebrew *Yehoshua* (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) and the Aramaic *Yeshua* (יֵשׁוּעַ) and is translated into Greek as *Iesou* (Ἰησοῦς). *Yeshua* means “Yahweh saves, rescues, delivers.” It is no wonder that God chose that name for our Lord and Savior, the Son of God.

"But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.'" Matthew 1:20-21

Paul's very personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ led him to lead a much different life than he had planned on living when he began his training at the feet of Gamaliel the Elder in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). Instead of becoming a leader of the Pharisees, even a member of the ruling Sanhedrin like his teacher Gamaliel (grandson of Hillel the Elder), Paul served Jesus Christ in foreign lands reaching people of all nationalities with the Gospel of the Grace of God.

"From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: 'You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.'" Acts 20:17-24

While some people would point to what Paul "gave up" to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul viewed it much differently. He saw what he "gained" from being a follower of Jesus.

“For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Philippians 3:3-11

I share this with you in the hope that we will all have the same attitude as Paul. May we all count earthly things as loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. May we count them as rubbish that we may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteous, but that which is through faith in Christ. May we know “Him” and the “power” of His resurrection. May we know the “fellowship” of His “sufferings,” being conformed to His death. What do we have to look forward to? Resurrection from the dead!

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, *and* declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Romans 1:1-4

Paul, like other Christian Apostles, makes a strong case for Christ's eternal position as the Son of God. Paul appealed to Christ's birth, death and resurrection. Those who claim that Paul never spoke or wrote about the Virgin Birth of Christ apparently missed this verse in Romans 1 where he declares that Jesus Christ was "born of the seed of David according to the flesh." In his second letter to Timothy, Paul repeated his affirmation of the Virgin Birth – "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel." (2 Timothy 2:8) It's important to note that in both Romans and 2 Timothy, Paul connected Christ's birth to His resurrection. Both of these truths are at the core of Christianity.

First, the Lord's birth – "**born of the seed of David according to the flesh.**"

This doctrine concerning the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ began thousands of years ago when God spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden – "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." (Genesis 3:15) Notice that God spoke to Eve about "her" Seed. God did not say anything to Adam about "his" Seed because the Seed God spoke about would not come through man. The Seed would come through a Virgin.

God also spoke to Abraham about this same Seed – "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Genesis 22:18) The Apostle Paul made it clear in his letter to the Galatians that the "Seed" God spoke about to Abraham is Christ Jesus our Lord – "Now to

Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ." (Galatians 3:16)

Paul said that Jesus Christ was born "of the seed of David according to the flesh." God promised that Israel's Savior would come through the physical lineage of King David.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, 'Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens.' 'I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: 'Your seed I will establish forever, And build up your throne to all generations.'" Selah" Psalm 89:1-4

"Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: His seed shall endure forever, And his throne as the sun before Me; It shall be established forever like the moon, Even *like* the faithful witness in the sky.' Selah" Psalm 89:35-37

The Apostle Matthew made clear that Christ was the promised Seed of David when he wrote this in his Gospel account:

"So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon *are* fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ *are* fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of

the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.' So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us.' Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus." Matthew 1:17-25

Christian historian and apostolic confidant Dr. Luke wrote two of the longest Books of the New Testament. He also made clear in his Gospel account that Jesus was the promised Seed of David, and, as promised in the Old Testament, would rule Israel from the Throne of David.

"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!' But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.' Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?' And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth

your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.' Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her." Luke 1:26-38

Paul was an Old Testament expert and knew that "the Christ" would come from David's lineage. He taught early in his ministry that Jesus was "the Christ" from the "seed" of David:

"He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after My *own* heart, who will do all My will.' From this man's seed, according to *the* promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus." Acts 13:22-23

The words "according to the flesh" are important for many important reasons – one of them being that it was through His flesh that the Seed of the woman would bruise (crush) the head of the serpent, even as the serpent would bruise the heel of the Seed. It was through His human flesh that Jesus Christ would be "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities."

"Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, *There is* no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was

oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor *was any* deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors." Isaiah 53

The doctrine of the "flesh" of Jesus Christ has been challenged for centuries. Can we finally put the argument to rest?

” ... concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh ...” Romans 1:3

In our last study we looked at the importance that Jesus Christ “was born of the seed of David.” That connected Jesus to both His position as the promised Messiah who would rule from the throne of His father David, and to God’s promise to Eve that her Seed would bruise (crush) the head of the seed of the serpent and God’s promise to Abraham concerning his Seed. Today, we will look at what being born “according to the flesh” means to Jews and Gentiles.

One of the beautiful things about Paul’s letter to the Romans is that he presented a powerful argument for Christianity to every part of society. We’ll learn more about the Roman Church in future studies, but we can already see in these first sentences of Paul’s letter that he is reaching out to the interests of everyone.

The Greek for “according to the flesh” is *kata sarka*. The word *kata* is – “a preposition denoting motion or diffusion or direction from the higher to the lower” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Zondervan Publishing, 1978). Paul used the word *kata* with the accusative (*sarka*), so it carries the idea of coming down upon. The word *sarka* translates as “physical, material flesh.”

It’s important to remember that Paul is still writing his first sentence to the Romans. Paul said he was “separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh ...” Christ’s physical (flesh and bone) birth to the Virgin Mary is critical to the Gospel of God. In fact, to remove Christ’s physical birth from the Gospel would render it powerless and useless. That, of course, cannot be done because the “flesh” of Christ is *sine qua non* to His purpose in coming to earth to save His people from their sins.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

"Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." Luke 24:39

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life." 1 John 1:1

"By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God." 1 John 4:2-3

Let's look at that last statement for a minute. God's eternal plan for His Son was that He "come in the flesh." Why? Because sin spread through flesh and through flesh sin had to be stopped. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12)

God began demonstrating the disease and the cure for sin through the flesh of animals, but it was only a picture of what Christ would do. The Jews' practice of animal sacrifices was a "shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things" (Hebrews 10:1). In fact, the animal sacrifices offered continually year after year were a constant reminder of the people's sins – "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). So, what was the meaning of the complex system of animal sacrifices in Judaism? It was about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the **Lamb** of God.

"Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.' Then I said, 'Behold,

I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.” Hebrews 10:5-7

Do you see it? God the Father and God the Holy Spirit prepared “a body” for God the Son so that He could do the Will of His Father. That hearkens back to the great words of Luke 1 – “And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God’ (Luke 1:35).

Mary wondered how she could become pregnant when she did “not know a man.” Gabriel’s answer came directly from Heaven. God the Father’s eternal plan had been that God the Son would become “flesh” and sacrifice His body and blood so that sinful human beings could be “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

This is a brilliant plan! The Eternal Son of God needed a human body in order to be a “sacrifice” for the human race. How could He do that and still be God? God the Spirit came “upon” Mary and God the Father “overshadowed” her so that the “Holy One” who would be born to her would be both human and “the Son of God.” Jesus was (and is) fully God and fully human.

I don’t want us to miss the power of Paul’s statement to the Romans – “born of the seed of David according to the flesh.” Jesus Christ is the **Seed** God promised to Eve and Abraham. Those promises were central to the overarching covenant (testament) God made to them. As the writer of Hebrews explained – “For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives” (Hebrews 9:16-17).

The covenants God made with men were made with blood – “not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood” (Hebrews 9:18). When Moses spoke the Law to the people of Israel, “he took the blood of calves and goats, with

water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you' (Hebrews 9:19-20). After that, Moses sprinkled blood on the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry – "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

Jesus accomplished something that no one else in the universe was able to do and He did it through His "flesh" – "so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28). And, just as Paul told the Romans that the "gospel of God" promised through the Old Testament prophets concerned Jesus Christ, the writer of Hebrews quotes Jesus as saying, "In the volume of the book it is written of Me." The "volume of the book" refers to the same prophets. Everything in the Hebrew Bible points to the coming of Christ in the flesh.

Let's go back for a moment to something we quoted from 1 John 4. It will help us understand what has been a continual problem in the history of the Church concerning the doctrine of the Jesus Christ coming "in the flesh."

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." 1 John 4:1-6

John wrote those words in his first letter because there were already people opposing the apostolic teaching that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. John called it “the spirit of the Antichrist.” That spirit, John said, “is now already in the world.” We know that the “spirit” behind any false doctrine taught by false prophets is Satan. Satan is the enemy of God and His people. Satan wants the world to believe that Jesus Christ did “not” come in the flesh, and his campaign against that vital teaching of the Church has been relentless.

" ... concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh ..." Romans 1:3

The Apostle Paul had the ability to say so much with so few words. Jesus is God the Son, Messiah, Lord God, and Seed of David according to the flesh. The Apostle John also had that ability:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ..."
John 1:1, 14

I was an atheist before becoming a Christian, so I didn't believe that Jesus was God or man. I thought he was just a myth or legend. However, because of the answers I received to a multitude of questions about the historicity of Jesus, I came to see that He was a man who claimed to be God even before I "believed" He was God and man. If an enquiring atheist can see that Jesus was a real flesh and blood man who claimed to be God, why can't people who believe in God and the Bible see that?

We discover the answer in the words of the Apostle John:

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and

the spirit of error.” 1 John 4:1-6

John was most likely the last Apostle standing. Paul, Peter, Andrew, Matthew, Philip, Nathanael and the other Apostles had become martyrs for Christ. It had fallen on John’s shoulders to carry the Apostolic banner to the end of the 1st century AD. In his first letter, John addressed serious problems in the early Church. Some members of one or more churches had left the others because of doctrinal differences. John put it in the context of the spiritual battle that it was – and still is:

“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.” John 2:18-19

This is the first time the term “antichrist” was used in the Bible. John is the only writer of Scripture to use it. Here are the other three times we find the word:

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.” 1 John 2:22

“... and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” 1 John 4:3

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” 2 John 1:7

Notice the behavior that accompanies the “antichrist” — “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son” — “every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the

flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist" — "many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

John spoke of "the Antichrist" and "many antichrists." Who did he mean by that? John and the other apostles had learned the identity of "the Antichrist" from Jesus the Christ.

"Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'" Luke 10:17-18

"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?" Luke 11:17-18

John knew that Satan had a spiritual kingdom that was "anti" Christ. John also knew that Satan was the "father" of those who opposed Christ — "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44) From Satan, the Antichrist, comes "the spirit of the Antichrist," which leads to "many deceivers" who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. "This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

Because of this false doctrine entering the Church concerning Jesus Christ coming "in the flesh," John wrote his first letter to oppose it. In fact, the first words he penned were a powerful reminder that he was an **eyewitness** of Christ's humanity.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we

have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

1 John 1:1-3

All of Christ's Apostles believed that He had come in the flesh and preached and taught the humanity of Christ throughout their ministry.

“Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.” Acts 2:29-31

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Romans 8:2-4

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” Ephesians 2:14-16

"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight."

Colossians 1:21-22

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory." 1

Timothy 3:16

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:19-22

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit ..." 1 Peter 3:18

"Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin ..." 1 Peter 4:1

"By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God ..." 1 John 4:2

This is the STRONG position of Christ and His Apostles concerning His coming in the flesh. It is a LIE of Satan that Jesus did not come in the flesh. It is the lie of the Antichrist and those who follow him — the antichrists. Why that particular lie? Because it is the KEY to the Seed of the woman (Jesus born of a virgin) crushing the head of the seed of the serpent (Satan).

“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.” 1 John 2:18

There is a supernatural being in the universe who is “anti” Christ. In fact, he is called the **Antichrist**. The people who follow the Antichrist and oppose Jesus Christ are called “antichrists.” The Greek word the Apostle John chose to use for “antichrists” is antichristoi. The word for “Antichrist” is antichristos. Both words have the idea of being “against Christ” and “instead of Christ”. The Antichrist is both “against” Christ and desirous to be “instead of” Christ.

What we know about Satan is that he is a “liar.” In fact, Jesus said that Satan is “a liar and the father of it.” (John 8:44) Satan uses lies to oppose Christ and His Message of Truth. In fact, the devil and his followers deny that Jesus is the Christ.

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.” 1 John 2:22

Another lie is that Christ did not come in the flesh.

“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” 1 John 4:2-3

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” 2 John 1:7

This deception, that Christ did not come in the flesh, has been a primary tool of Satan since the middle of the 1st Century. Defending the “humanity” of Christ is a battle the Church has waged for almost 2,000 years. We can learn a great deal

about how to fight that battle by looking at how Christians who lived before us opposed this false doctrine.

The "antichrist" opposition to the humanity of Christ was strong during the 1st century and continued to grow in the years and centuries that followed. One of the earliest groups was known as "docetics" based on the Greek word *dokein* ("to seem") and *dókēsis* ("phantom, apparition").

Docetism was an early heresy (1st Century AD) that taught the doctrine of Christ's divinity without true humanity. Docetics believed that Jesus was God, but that His appearance on earth was an illusion (Jesus only "seemed" to be flesh). They believed that matter was inherently evil and God could not be associated with matter. Therefore, God could not become matter (Incarnation) and be born of a woman (Virgin Birth). Docetics taught that Jesus could not be touched by people (since He was just an apparition), could not eat food (since He was an illusion), could not suffer pain (since He was a phantom), could not die on the Cross and was therefore never raised from the dead since He never died.

This is so obviously opposed to the clear teaching of Christ's Apostles that you might think the early Church easily dismissed it. However, Docetism was a problem for Christians for centuries. Even as Satan raises up his "antichrists" to spread lies about Christ, God raises up Christian apologists to oppose false teaching and tell the truth about Christ.

Ignatius of Antioch opposed Docetism at the end of the 1st Century and beginning of the 2nd Century. Here are portions from two of Ignatius' letters addressing the humanity of Christ.

"All these things did he suffer for our sake, to the end that we might be saved. And he truly suffered, even as he truly raised himself up; not as certain unbelievers say, that he suffered in semblance, they themselves only existing in semblance; and even according to their opinions shall it happen unto them, since they are bodiless and of the nature of devils. For

I also know and believe, that he exists in the flesh even after the resurrection. And when he came unto them who were with Peter he said unto them, Take, handle me, and see that I am not a spirit without a body; and straightway they touched him and believed, being convinced by his flesh and his spirit. On this account also they despised death, and were found superior to death. But after his resurrection, he ate and drank with them, as being in the flesh, though spiritually he was united to the Father.”
The Epistle of St. Ignatius of Antioch to the Smyrnaeans, translated by Charles H. Poole, 1885

“Be ye deaf therefore, when any man speaketh to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the race of David, who was the Son of Mary, who was truly born and ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth; who moreover was truly raised from the dead, His Father having raised Him, who in the like fashion will so raise us also who believe on Him — His Father, I say, will raise us — in Christ Jesus, apart from whom we have not true life.” Ignatius to the Trallians, translated by Lightfoot & Harmer, 1891

Iranaeus was born in the early part of the 2nd Century and raised in a Christian family. He was a student of Polycarp of Smyrna who claimed to be a student of the Apostle John. Iranaeus traveled to Gaul (France) and ministered there for many years. He wrote many books and became one of the great defenders of Christian doctrine. Here are portions of Iranaeus’ letters concerning the humanity of Christ.

“Now the Lord would not have recapitulated in Himself that ancient and primary enmity against the serpent, fulfilling the promise of the Creator (Demiurgi), and performing His command, if He had come from another Father. But as He is one and the same, who formed us at the beginning, and sent His Son at the end, the Lord did perform His command, being

made of a woman, by both destroying our adversary, and perfecting man after the image and likeness of God. And for this reason He did not draw the means of confounding him from any other source than from the words of the law, and made use of the Father's commandment as a help towards the destruction and confusion of the apostate angel. Fasting forty days, like Moses and Elias, He afterwards hungered, first, in order that we may perceive that He was a real and substantial man— for it belongs to a man to suffer hunger when fasting; and secondly, that His opponent might have an opportunity of attacking Him. For as at the beginning it was by means of food that [the enemy] persuaded man, although not suffering hunger, to transgress God's commandments, so in the end he did not succeed in persuading Him that was an hungered to take that food which proceeded from God. For, when tempting Him, he said, If you be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But the Lord repulsed him by the commandment of the law, saying, It is written, Man does not live by bread alone. As to those words [of His enemy,] If you be the Son of God, [the Lord] made no remark; but by thus acknowledging His human nature He baffled His adversary, and exhausted the force of his first attack by means of His Father's word. The corruption of man, therefore, which occurred in paradise by both [of our first parents] eating, was done away with by [the Lord's] want of food in this world. But he, being thus vanquished by the law, endeavoured again to make an assault by himself quoting a commandment of the law. For, bringing Him to the highest pinnacle of the temple, he said to Him, If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down. For it is written, That God shall give His angels charge concerning you, and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest perchance you dash your foot against a stone; thus concealing a falsehood under the guise of Scripture, as is done by all the heretics. For that was indeed written, [namely], That He has given His angels charge concerning Him; but cast yourself down from hence no Scripture said in reference to Him:

this kind of persuasion the devil produced from himself. The Lord therefore confuted him out of the law, when He said, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God; pointing out by the word contained in the law that which is the duty of man, that he should not tempt God; and in regard to Himself, since He appeared in human form, [declaring] that He would not tempt the Lord his God. The pride of reason, therefore, which was in the serpent, was put to nought by the humility found in the man [Christ], and now twice was the devil conquered from Scripture, when he was detected as advising things contrary to God's commandment, and was shown to be the enemy of God by [the expression of] his thoughts. He then, having been thus signally defeated, and then, as it were, concentrating his forces, drawing up in order all his available power for falsehood, in the third place showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, saying, as Luke relates, All these will I give you—for they are delivered to me; and to whom I will, I give them—if you will fall down and worship me. The Lord then, exposing him in his true character, says, Depart, Satan; for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve. He both revealed him by this name, and showed [at the same time] who He Himself was. For the Hebrew word Satan signifies an apostate. And thus, vanquishing him for the third time, He spurned him from Him finally as being conquered out of the law; and there was done away with that infringement of God's commandment which had occurred in Adam, by means of the precept of the law, which the Son of man observed, who did not transgress the commandment of God." *Against Heresies* (Book V, Chapter 21), Translated by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, 1885

Tertullian was another defender of the Doctrine of Christ's Humanity from the latter part of the 2nd century to the early part of the 3rd century. You can read more about his position on this important teaching in his books *On the Flesh of Christ* and *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*.

The battle concerning the humanity of Christ raged for centuries. Churches were divided about Christ's Nature and Substance (hypostasis). That battle opened the Christian Church to a variety of false doctrines, including:

Docetism – the belief that Jesus Christ was divine and whose human appearance was just an illusion

Apollinarianism – the belief that Jesus Christ's divine nature was greater than and replaced the human nature and that the two natures of Christ could not coexist within one person

Monophysitism – the belief that Jesus Christ had only one nature, divine

Nestorianism – the belief that Jesus Christ was two persons in the sense that the human and divine are separate

Adoptionism – the belief that Jesus Christ was a man who lived a sinless life and was adopted by God at the baptism of John (also known as dynamic monarchianism)

Subordinationism – the belief that Jesus Christ is less than the Father in His essence and His attributes and that the Holy Spirit is less than Christ in His essence and attributes

Modalism – the belief that God is one Person in three modes (also known as Sabellianism)

Marcionism – the belief that Jesus Christ was the son of a good god who came to redeem humanity from the evil god of the Old Testament (Marcion proposed a New Testament canon that included only Luke's Gospel and some of Paul's letters)

Arianism – the belief that Jesus Christ was a created being, mutable and less than God

Anomeanism – the belief that Jesus Christ was “unlike” the Father

Monarchianism – the belief that God is only one Person, the Father, and the Son and Holy Spirit are different manifestations or aspects of the one God.

Kenosisism – the belief that Jesus Christ gave up some of His divine attributes during His earthly ministry

Socianianism – the belief that Jesus Christ was a deified man and not part of the Trinity.

Tritheism – the belief that Jesus Christ was one of three separate gods

What’s important to notice here is that each of the heresies attacks some or all of the central truths of Christianity: (1) Jesus Christ is the Eternal Word of God, the great Creator of the universe, (2) Jesus Christ the Eternal Word of God became flesh through incarnation by conception through the power of the Holy Spirit and birth to a virgin mother, (3) the flesh of Jesus Christ was crucified unto death, (4) the flesh of Jesus Christ was raised from death, and (5) the resurrected flesh of Jesus Christ ascended back to Heaven where He sits on the Eternal Throne of God.

The successful attack on any one of these fundamental and critical truths of Christianity would do irreparable damage to the Faith as given to us by the Holy Spirit through the hands of the Apostles. Church leaders called multiple councils to deal with these heretical attacks on Christianity. The false doctrine of Docetism was addressed by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD and led to this confession: *

“We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a

reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us." Chalcedonian Creed, 451 AD

The decisions made at the council did not end the teaching of false doctrines concerning the Nature and Substance of Jesus Christ. Satan has not changed the target or tactics of his attacks. The devil continues to divide the Church through false teachings concerning the Deity and Humanity of Jesus Christ. It is also his attempt to keep millions of lost people from hearing the truth about salvation that comes through Jesus Christ alone.

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."
Ephesians 6:11-12

* The "confessions" of Church councils through the centuries were written by fallible men who were not writing under the "inspiration" (*theopneustos*) of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, their decisions may also be fallible. The only infallible Writings about Christian doctrine are those of the Apostles canonized in the New

Testament of the Holy Bible. They did write as “given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), so it is vital that Christians obey the Writings of the New Testament and compare every other teaching to those “Scriptures.” Adopting the “confessions” of men against the clear teaching of the Holy Bible can lead to disobedience, division and disappointment at the least — heresy at the worst.

"... and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Romans 1:4

Romans 1:1-4 is one sentence. Verse 4 is the last part of that sentence and a vital component in the opening statement of Paul's amazing letter to Christians in Rome. The context is Paul's greeting to the saints (Romans 1:7) that includes the following Christian doctrines (teaching):

1. Paul is a bondservant of Jesus Christ
2. Paul is called to be an apostle
3. Paul is separated to the Gospel of God
4. God promised His Gospel before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures (Old Testament)
5. The Gospel concerns God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord
6. Jesus was born of the seed of David according to the flesh
7. Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead

Romans 1:1-4 is Paul's opening salvo concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. The Apostle is writing a letter to the Romans in preparation for his trip to see them. Some of the Romans knew what Paul taught about Christ, but many had not heard Paul preach. People often lied about Paul's teaching and the Apostle wrote letters to address those lies. As Paul prepared to go to Rome, he made sure that no one would misunderstand what he believed and taught about the Humanity and Deity of Jesus Christ. Paul made clear that the Gospel he preached concerned the Birth, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ – the Son of God.

tou horisthentos huiou theou en dunamei kata pneuma hagosunes ex anastaseos nekron Iesou Christou tou kuriou hemon

I love to look at the New Testament in Koine Greek. It was the language of the common people of that time and carried great meaning to the hearers and readers of Paul's letters. Take for instance Romans 1:4.

tou horisthentos – “and declared” ... comes from the root word *horizo*, “to mark off boundaries, to decree, to appoint, to designate.” The English word “horizon” comes from *horizo*. The word is genitive, singular, masculine, participle, aorist, passive. That's important to notice because Paul used a similar word earlier in the sentence – “called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.” The word “separated” is *aphorismenos* and also comes from the root verb *horizo* and has the idea of being “marked off by boundaries.” It is a perfect passive participle. God set apart Paul from the rest of the world for the purpose of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A primary difference is that the word “separated” in verse one is about God marking off Paul from others with a boundary at a past time that continued to have present results. The word “declared” in verse four is a statement of Christ's being the single, the One and Only, with the “designation” as “the Son of God.”

What we have here is the combination of the Humanity of Jesus Christ (verse 3) with the Deity of Jesus Christ (verse 4): “concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God.” Jesus “was born of the seed of David according to the flesh” – that's His Humanity. Jesus was also “declared to be the Son of God” – that's His Deity. Notice that Paul presents them in the same sentence as one doctrine. Jesus is both man and God. He is the God-Man. Though many have tried to argue that Jesus is one or the other but not both, Paul presents clearly that Jesus is equally God and Man. There is no one else like Him in existence. He is the only “One.”

One of the many errors about Jesus Christ is that He became "the Son of God" during or after His baptism and temptation, based on His obedience to God. Others have taught that Jesus became the Son of God after His obedience unto death on the Cross and that His reward from God was to be raised from the dead and receive the designation as God's Son.

Both of these views do great damage to the Glory of Christ and our salvation if Jesus was born a mortal man with the sinful blood of Adam coursing through His veins. Jesus was not a "good man" who found favor with God and enjoyed the blessings of God because of human "goodness." If that is true, Jesus would be no better than Noah or Abraham or Moses or any other sinner who found favor with God. Though they had God's "favor," they were in no position to die for the sins of mankind and make the payment in full to God. Only the Eternal, Perfect Son of God could do that – and Jesus did do that.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:1-4, 14

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Colossians 1:15-17

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He

humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:5-8

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Hebrews 1:1-3

“But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.’ And: ‘You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail.’” Hebrews 1:8-12

Jesus was “decreed, designated, appointed, marked out” to be the Son of God “in power” (*en dunamei* – in the sphere of power). This is not the natural power of the natural man. This is the **Almighty Power** of the **Almighty God**. There is no one like Him – no one. No matter what men may say or do, they cannot take away Christ’s Power or undo what He did for us on the Cross.

“And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.” Hebrews 10:11-13

At this very moment, as you read this study, Jesus sits at the Right Hand of God, waiting for the day when His enemies will become His footstool.

I very much like the next verse in Hebrews 10 because it speaks about us: "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). We are perfected forever because of the great Sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, even as we are "being sanctified" for His glory.

“... and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Romans 1:4

The Apostle Paul, in the first sentence of his epistle to Christians in Rome, introduces us to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It's clear from Paul's letters to the ancient churches that he believed and taught the Doctrine of the Trinity – God in Three Persons. It's a doctrine that Paul had already developed and taught extensively by the time he wrote his letter to the Romans.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” 2 Corinthians 3:17

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” 2 Corinthians 13:14

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:4-6

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Titus 3:4-7

Paul wrote most, if not all, of his letters before the Gospel writers wrote their accounts. What they quoted Jesus saying supported what Paul had been teaching for years.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..." Matthew 28:19

"Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?' And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'" Luke 1:34-35

"It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" Mark 1:9-11

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." John 14:16-17

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you." John 16:12-15

Other apostles also wrote about the Trinity.

“... elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ ...” 1 Peter 1:2

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Jude 20-21

It's important to see that what Paul is telling the Roman Christians is that he believed in the Holy Trinity. The Trinity was not the teaching of the Jews nor the Gentiles. The Jews believed in the “One God” of Israel and gentiles believed in the “many gods” of the pagan religions. Paul's teaching stood as the most unique of its kind and time – One God in Three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In his first sentence to the Romans, Paul demonstrated clearly that the Gospel of God had been “promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures” and concerned “His Son Jesus Christ our Lord,” who had been “born of the seed of David according to the flesh,” and declared to be the Son of God with power “according to the Spirit of holiness.”

The words “with power according to the Spirit of holiness” in the Greek are – εν δυναμει κατα πνευμα αγιωσυνης. Jesus Christ was “declared” (*horizo* – marked out, appointed, decreed, determined) to be the Son of God “with power” (*en dunamei* – strength, ability, capability), which is the idea of “in the sphere of power.” That power is “according to the Spirit of holiness.”

Everything Jesus did while He ministered on earth was done in concert with the Holy Spirit. The Virgin Mary was “found with child of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:18). When Jesus came up from the baptismal waters, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord “like a dove” (Matthew 3:16). The Holy Spirit then led Jesus into the wilderness “to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew

4:1). Jesus quoted Isaiah to His disciples – “I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles” (Matthew 12:18) and “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). After His resurrection, Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). Before His ascension to Heaven, Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them and that they would be witnesses to Him “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Paul wrote later in Romans that the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11) and I believe that’s the same context here in Romans 1:4. However, there are some good commentators who believe the “Spirit of holiness” addressed in 1:4 is really the spiritual “essence” of Christ. Denney writes, “Not the Holy Spirit, but a description of Christ ethically as *kata sarka* describes him physically.” (St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, Dr. James Denney, The Expositor’s Greek New Testament, Edited by W.R. Nicoll, 1900). Vincent writes, “The reference is not to the Holy Spirit, who is nowhere designated by this phrase, but to the spirit of Christ as the seat of the divine nature belonging to His person. As God is spirit, the divine nature of Christ is spirit, and its characteristic quality is holiness.” (Word Studies In The New Testament, Volume III, The Epistles of Paul, p. 4, Dr. Marvin R. Vincent, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887)

One of the primary reasons I believe the Greek word *pneuma* (spirit) refers to the Holy Spirit in Romans 1:4 is because of the context – “... concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness ...” The human nature of Christ came to us through His human mother, Mary – “born of the seed of David according to the flesh.” The Divine Nature of

Christ came to us through His Holy Spirit – “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 1:20)

God the Son had always existed and had walked on the earth in His Eternal Form (e.g. Angel of the Lord) often in the past, but the Holy Spirit “conceived” (*gennethen* – begotten, born) God’s Son in Mary’s womb. The root word *gennaō* is generally used of men begetting children. In this miraculous, one-time occurrence the Holy Spirit of God performed the masculine role of “begetting” the Son of God in the virgin’s womb. Amazing! Paul presents in powerful and unmistakable language the fact that Jesus Christ is both **man and God**.

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Romans 1:1-4

It is easy to see from the beginning of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans that he is extremely serious about God’s call on his life. Paul says he is a bondservant, apostle, separated to the Gospel of God. Out of all of the letters Paul wrote to churches, the opening of Romans is the most intense and packed with Christian doctrine.

We come today to the central truth of Christianity – in fact, the truth upon which Christianity rises or falls – the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The Greek is *ex anastaseos nekron*. The literal translation is “by a resurrection of dead persons.” How surprised would you be if someone you knew had died, someone you had seen buried, appeared to you alive? Shocked certainly comes to mind. You might rub your eyes and take a second and a third look because it’s something you had never seen before. What would you think of someone who came to you and told you they had seen a dead person walking around alive? You would probably think they were imagining things. That’s how Christ’s disciples reacted when they first heard that Jesus had risen from the dead and then later when they saw the risen Jesus in the flesh.

“Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not

believe.” Mark 16:9-11

“It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the otherwomen with them, who told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.” Luke 24:10-11

“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord ... Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ So he said to them, ‘Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace to you!’ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’ And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” John 20:19-20, 24-29

“ Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have. When He had said this, He showed

them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, 'Have you any food here?' So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence. Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.'" Luke 24:36-49

"Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen." Mark 16:14

The reactions we see in the Gospel accounts are certainly understandable from a human perspective. Even though Jesus had told them He would rise from the dead, they either didn't believe Him or didn't understand what He had said. They were genuinely surprised by Christ's resurrection.

It wasn't that the disciples didn't believe in a future resurrection. Isaiah wrote, "Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isaiah 26:19)

The prophet Daniel wrote:

“At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.” Daniel 12:1-3

One of the great debates between Pharisees and Sadducees during the time of Christ and the apostles was about the resurrection of the dead.

“The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him ...” Matthew 22:23

“But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!’ And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.” Acts 23:6-8

When Jesus spoke with Martha about the death of her brother, Lazarus, He said: “Your brother will rise again.” To that, Martha replied: “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”(John 11:23-24) The disciples had seen Jesus raise people from the dead, but it was closer to the time of death and may have seemed to them like resuscitation rather than resurrection. Lazarus was a different situation because he had been dead several days, long enough for the beginnings of physical decay. There was no question that what Jesus did that

day was raise Lazarus from the dead.

The Lord's reply to Martha just before He raised her brother from the dead was this: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26) Martha's answer was that she did believe Him: "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." (John 11:27) Jesus did raise Lazarus from the dead, much to the amazement of everyone who saw it and heard about it.

Jesus had the power to raise people from the dead and God raised Him from the dead (Acts 13:33; Romans 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; Galatians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). As Paul wrote in Romans 1:4, the resurrection from the dead was integral to the declaration of Christ to be the Son of God.

“Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 1:5-7

One of the polite criticisms I’ve heard from Christians about the Apostle Paul’s writings is that he is “wordy.” It’s important to remember how the Holy Spirit “inspired” the Bible writers. Paul wrote that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17) The Greek word translated “inspiration” is *theopneustos*, which comes from the words *theos* (God) and *pneo* (to breathe). All Scripture (*graphe*) is given by God as He spiritually “breathes” on the writer.

As a writer I understand the concept of inspiration. It is a type of passion that moves a writer to write about what they care about, what interests them, what they find important and necessary. As a Christian writer I understand the concept of spiritual inspiration. It is a type of passion that moves a writer to write about spiritual things, things God cares about. I even have the spiritual sense that the Holy Spirit helps me study and write. However, I have never been “inspired” to write Scripture. No one has since the Apostle John wrote at the end of the 1st century AD. What that must have been like for Paul and the other writers of God’s Word – to have the Spirit of God “breathe” His Words into their minds.

Peter is another apostle the Holy Spirit “inspired” to write His Word. Here’s what Peter wrote about that process.

“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2

Peter 1:19-21

Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke "as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." The words "were moved by" are a translation of the Greek *pheromenoi*. It comes from the word *phero*, which means "to bear, lead, carry." Luke used the word in Acts 27 to describe the ship he and Paul were riding on as being driven or carried by the wind. The word *pheromenoi* is a present passive participle, which means that something or Someone carried the holy men along as they prophesied. That Someone was the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God spoke through prophets, like Peter, John and Paul, to convey His Will. He used the personalities, skills, training and mental abilities of each man to communicate His Truth. Paul was skilled in critical thinking. He was trained in thinking, speaking and writing at one of the finest rabbinical schools in Jerusalem from childhood. He had been a Pharisee and special legal counsel to the high priest of Israel before Jesus called him on the road to Damascus to become His disciple and an apostle to the Gentiles. The Lord gave Paul many visions and insights into spiritual things (e.g. 2 Corinthians 12), which prepared him for receiving and writing God's Word as the Holy Spirit "carried" him along.

Though some may view Paul's writings as "wordy," the Holy Spirit used the unique skills and calling of Paul to communicate the Gospel of God to the world in a complete and powerful way so that all nations would know of the great Gospel of the great Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Paul made it clear from the beginning of his epistle to the Romans that he was a "bondservant" of Jesus Christ, called to be an "apostle." He repeats that in Romans 1:5 – "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name."

What Paul does in verse 5 is put meat on the bones of his apostleship. As we saw in Acts 9 and 26, Jesus called Paul for a special ministry to open the door of faith to the Gentiles:

“... he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” Acts 9:15

“I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” Acts 26:16-18

Paul, writing his letter to the Christians in Rome more than 20 years after his conversion, writes from experience, revelation and inspiration. Paul understood that the reason he had received the grace of God and the call to apostleship was for “obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.” Paul was laser focused about the Lord’s purpose for calling him to the special ministry to the Gentiles. God wanted (and wants) “obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.”

The Greek is – δι ου ελαβομεν χαριν και αποστολην εις υπακοην πιστεως εν πασιν τοις εθνεσιν υπερ του ονοματος αυτου.

The word *hupakoen* comes from *hupo* (under) and *akouo* (to hear) and means “obedience, compliance, submission.” The idea is of someone who is under the authority of another person (being subject to) hearing and doing what they are told to do (responding to a direct order). Paul, who ministered under the authority of Jesus Christ and was subject to doing whatever He said, called on Gentiles and Jews to “obedience.”

This obedience was "to the faith among all nations." The words "to the" are a translation of the Greek word *eis*, which is a preposition often used to express purpose or result. Paul's apostleship had the purpose of bringing about the result of obedience to the "faith." The word "faith" is *pisteos* and means "firm persuasion." It is in the genitive case in the Greek which is the case of description. Some scholars believe the word describes this as obedience to "the Christian faith," while others believe it is obedience that proceeds from faith in Christ. Let's look at the rest of the verse to see if we get a better sense of which view we should have of the words.

en pasin tois ethnesin translates as "among all the nations." Paul presents the fulness of his calling by Christ to be an apostle to include *pasin* (all, every) *tois* (the) *ethnesin* (ethnicities, nations). The word *ethnesin* had originally meant "a multitude," but was used during the 1st century AD for nations or groups of ethnic people. This was a specific designation that separated Paul's special ministry to Gentiles. While Peter was surprised when the Holy Spirit sent him to preach the Gospel to Gentiles (Acts 10), Paul knew from the beginning of his call by Jesus and the Spirit that preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles was his special and specific responsibility.

huper tou onomatou autou translates literally as "on behalf of the name of him."

The word *huper* was a primary preposition in Koine Greek. It was understood as doing something "on behalf of" or "for the sake of" someone or something. Paul wrote that everything he did as an apostle to the Gentiles was "for the sake of" or "on behalf of" the name (*onomatos*) of Him (*autou*). The word *onomatos* is the genitive singular of the noun *onoma*. The Greeks, and other ancient peoples, saw a person's name as both an identifier and describer. Your name identifies who you are and describes something about your character. Paul was saying that he preached the Gospel of God to the Gentiles on behalf of the Jesus Christ.

Speaking on behalf of someone connoted a position of representation. Paul was Christ's representative to the Gentiles. Remember what Jesus said to Annanias? "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." Jesus chose Paul to represent Him before Gentiles, kings and Jews. That's what Paul is telling the Romans in verse 5 – "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ."

It's important when we read Paul's letters to understand what happened as he wrote, what happened as his intended recipients read, what Christians have read through the centuries and what you and I are reading now. This is God's Word. Paul spoke on the authority of God the Father, representing God the Son, directed and empowered by God the Spirit. Paul received grace and apostleship for the purpose of preaching the Gospel of God toward the result of obedience to the faith among all nations. What Paul wrote to the Romans was for the overarching purpose of the entire world knowing the Name of Jesus Christ.

Given this context it appears that the purpose of Paul receiving grace and apostleship was that people from all nations would come to faith in Christ and obey Him in faith. People are saved by grace through faith and the just live by faith. Everything begins, continues and ends with faith.

It's important to remember that we are now Christ's representatives to the nations. What does Jesus want us to accomplish for Him? "... obedience to the faith among all nations for His name." That's our calling, our purpose, our goal – to see a world of Gentiles and Jews obey God through Christ Jesus the Lord.

"Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 1:5-7

In the last part of our study we looked at verse 5 – "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name." Now we move to verse 6 – "among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ." Even though it's a different verse, it's part of the same sentence.

Paul is reminding the Christians in Rome that they are part of the special ministry God gave to Paul – "we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name."

Rome was the largest metropolitan city in the Roman Empire. It was founded in the middle of the 8th century BC and expanded during the next several centuries to become one of the largest and most powerful empires of the ancient world. It's estimated that during the time of Christ and the early Christian Church, the Roman Empire covered more than 2.5 million square miles and had about 20% of the world's population.

The population of the City of Rome at the time Paul wrote his letter to the Christians may have been as high as one-million people. Men, women, children, artisans, soldiers, slaves, government officials, rich and poor ... it would have been made up of a wide variety of people groups making for a challenging ministry for a Jew preaching the Christian Gospel. Also keep in mind that Nero was emperor of the Roman Empire when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans – another challenge to ministry.

The Roman Christians were part of the “all nations” called to “obedience to the faith.” The Roman Empire was made up of many individual countries and many citizens from those countries lived in the capital city of Rome. Their beliefs about “God” would have included monotheism (one God) and polytheism (many gods). The Roman Empire held strong beliefs about the importance of the “will of the gods.” They saw themselves as religious (*religio*) and pious (*pietas*) and believed that having good relations with the gods was a major reason for the continued success of the Empire. Some elected officials served as religious priests (augurs and pontiffs). A primary duty of these priests was to maintain peace with the gods (*pax deorum*). One of the titles of Roman emperors was **Pontifex Maximus** (Greatest Pontiff) and served as the high priest of the College of Pontiffs in the religion of Roman paganism.

“... among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ ...”

The Apostle Paul called both Gentile polytheists and Jewish monotheists to worship Jesus Christ as God. Christians, no matter their earthly race, are “the called of Jesus Christ.” This perspective caused Paul and other Christians difficulty because it placed them at odds with the state religion of Rome. In spite of that, Paul told Roman Christians to submit to the authority of the government in earthly matters (Romans 13).

The phrase “the called of Jesus Christ” is *kletoi Iesou Christou* (κλητοι ησου χριστου) and means the “invited, summoned.” The word *kletoi* came from the word *klesis* which was used for receiving an invitation to a feast. It was a high honor and privilege, especially for slaves and poor citizens of Rome, to be invited by someone of a high position to attend a royal feast. The invitation (calling) of Jesus Christ was much higher than any invitation an earthly ruler could bestow on a person.

The word *kletoi* is an adjective and was used to describe a person. In this context Paul claimed that Christians were the “called” of Jesus Christ. Paul used the word *kletos* in verse 1 to describe how he was a bondservant of Jesus Christ,

"called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God." Paul also used the word in verse 7 of chapter 1 and verse 28 of chapter 8 in his letter to the Romans. He had used the word in similar ways in an earlier letter to the Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:1-2, 24).

"... To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints ..."

Paul used the word again in verse 7 – κλητοῖς ἁγίοις – "called saints." He made it clear from the beginning of his letter that he was writing to "all who are in Rome." He defined them further by saying they were "beloved of God" and they were "called to be saints."

The words "beloved of God" are ἀγαπητοὶ θεοῦ. The word "beloved" is a translation of the Greek word *agapetois*, an adjective which means "esteemed, worthy of love, favored, loved dearly." In the usage of Romans 1:7 Paul was describing the relationship of Christians to God – "beloved of God." Paul also used the same word to describe Christians love for each other in his letters to the Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. The word *agapetois* comes from the word *agape* – unconditional love. Christians are highly esteemed, greatly favored and deeply loved by God.

The believers in Rome were also "called to be saints." The words "to be" are not in the original and were added by translators to help with understanding. The literal is "called saints" (κλητοῖς ἁγίοις), which means they were "invited, summoned" (to be) "saints." The word *hagiois* identified something or someone as set apart for sacred service. To be set apart "to" also carried the idea of being set apart "from." In the case of Christians we are set apart "from unholiness" and set apart "to holiness." The Christians in Rome were "called" of Jesus Christ, "beloved" of God and "called" to serve God.

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul greeted recipients of his letters with the phrase “grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” in most of his letters (e.g. Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Philemon 1:3). He changed the greeting slightly in his letters to Timothy and Titus – “Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.”

There’s more here than just a traditional greeting in the ancient world. The Apostle Paul included Jesus Christ with the Name of God – “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The grace and the peace come from God – Father and Son. The first 7 verses of Romans are clearly Paul’s “Statement of Faith” that Jesus Christ is “our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

Our calling is to obey Him and serve Him. Period.

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." Romans 1:8-12

The Apostle Paul had a strong desire to visit Christians in Rome. Based on what Paul wrote in Romans and 1 Corinthians and what Luke wrote about Paul's travels in Acts, we believe Paul wrote to the Romans from somewhere in Greece in 56 or 57 AD.

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."

The Apostle Paul was motivated by a deep love – love for God and for people. Paul was also deeply thankful. Love will do that to you – cause you to be thankful.

πρωτον μεν ευχαριστω τω θεω μου δια ιησου χριστου υπερ παντων υμων

Proton – "firstly, first in time or place, first in succession"

Paul has a lot to share with the Romans and he begins with this – *men eucharisto to theo mou dia Iesou Chistou huper panton humon* – "I thank the God of me through Jesus Christ concerning all of you."

You've heard the word Eucharist (Communion, Lord's Supper). It comes from the Greek word *eucharisto* and means "to be grateful, feel thankful, give thanks." The word comes from *eucharistos* – "grateful, thankful, mindful of favors," which comes from *charizomai* – "do a favor to, show graciousness, kindness,

benevolence, pardon, forgive, to restore,” which comes from the root word *charis* – “grace, unmerited favor, loving kindness.”

The word *charis* is at the heart of the word *eucharisto*. The word *eu* means “to be well off, prosper.”

Paul is thankful to “my God” or “the God of me.” Paul had a personal relationship with God. Paul belonged to God and he viewed God as belonging to Him in the sense of being his Heavenly Father.

Paul was deeply and sincerely thankful to God “through Jesus Christ.” The word “through” (*dia*) is interesting in how Paul used it – “I thank my God through Jesus Christ.” Why didn’t Paul just say “I thank my God”? Why add *dia Iesou Christou* in the thanksgiving? Paul understood and taught that access to God was “through” Jesus Christ. The word *dia* carries the idea of “by the means of, by reason of, for the sake of,” and describes the unique relationship the Christian has with Christ and the Father and the unique relationship Christ has with the Father. That unique relationship is one of “mediation” and “advocacy” –

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” 1 Timothy 2:5-6

“What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.” Galatians 3:19-20

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.” Hebrews 8:6

"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Hebrews 9:11-15

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel." Hebrews 12:22-24

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." 1 John 2:1-2

Paul thanked God "through Jesus Christ" because Jesus was the great Mediator and Advocate for Paul with the Father and He is for us as well. Giving thanks to God is far more than moving our lips to form words of thanks. God the Father hears our prayers **because of** Jesus.

Christianity is a one-of-a-kind worldview because of the belief that Jesus Christ is the sole Mediator between God and humans. No one else meets all of the criteria for being that Mediator.

1. Must be a man (Hebrews 2)
2. Must be a faithful man (Hebrew 3)
3. Must be a sinless man (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21-22)

Here are some thoughts about the importance of Christ's role as Mediator from a few commentators:

“All Christ's acts and sufferings in the execution of his mediatorial work were, therefore, the acts and sufferings of a divine person. It was the Lord of glory who was crucified; it was the Son of God who poured out his soul unto death.”
(Dr. Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology)

“Many Jews had a superstitious or idolatrous respect for angels, because they had received the law and other tidings of the Divine will by their ministry. They looked upon them as mediators between God and men, and some went so far as to pay them a kind of religious homage or worship. Thus it was necessary that the apostle should insist, not only on Christ's being the Creator of all things, and therefore of angels themselves, but as being the risen and exalted Messiah in human nature, to whom angels, authorities, and powers are made subject. To prove this, several passages are brought from the Old Testament. On comparing what God there says of the angels, with what he says to Christ, the inferiority of the angels to Christ plainly appears. Here is the office of the angels; they are God's ministers or servants, to do his pleasure. But, how much greater things are said of Christ by the Father! And let us own and honour him as God; for if he had not been God, he had never done the Mediator's work, and had never worn the Mediator's crown. It is declared how Christ was qualified for the office of Mediator, and how he was confirmed in it: he has the name Messiah from his being anointed. Only as Man he has his fellows, and as anointed with the Holy Spirit; but he is above all prophets,

priests, and kings, that ever were employed in the service of God on earth. ”
(Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Bible)

“There is a fullness of the fitness and abilities in Christ to discharge his work and office as mediator, which greatly lies in his being both God and man, or in the union of the two natures, divine and human, in one person. Hereby he becomes abundantly qualified to be the day’s-man betwixt us, able to lay his hand upon us both; or in other words, to be the mediator between God and man; to be both a merciful and faithful high-priest, in things pertaining to God, and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: (Job 9:33, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 2:17) For being man, he had somewhat to offer in sacrifice to God, and was thereby capable of making satisfaction in that nature which sinned, which the law and justice of God seem to have required, and also of conveying the blessings of grace procured by him to elect men; for which reason, he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. The holiness of Christ’s human nature greatly fitted him to be an high-priest, advocate and intercessor, and very often an emphasis is put upon this in the sacred writings; as when he is said (John 3:5, Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 1:10) to take away sin, and in him is no sin, to offer up himself without spot to God, and we are said to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish: And, indeed, such a redeemer is proper for us, such an advocate suit us, who is Jesus Christ the righteous: such an high-priest became us, is every way fit for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Being God as well as man, there is a sufficient virtue in all his actions and sufferings to answer what they were designed for; in his blood to cleanse fro all sin, in his righteousness to justify from it, and in his sacrifice to expiate and atone for it. Being the might God, he could travel in the greatness of his strength, draw nigh to God for us, offer up himself to God, bear our sins, and all the punishment due unto them, without failing or being discouraged; his own arm alone was capable of bringing salvation to himself and us; there is nothing wanting in him, to make

him a complete Savior of the body, and head of the church.” (John Gill, The Fullness of the Mediator)

“How was this demonstration to be made? How was the law to be honoured? Who was to do it? See, God’s own Son, closely associated with him, one with him in the formation and government of the universe, takes upon himself human nature, and represents the race; he undertakes to be the impersonation and representative of sin. God is about to show how he regards sin, by inflicting the penalty due to man, upon one who has come forth to be a Mediator between the sinner and the insulted majesty of the law. God is about to make a terrible demonstration, and show to the whole universe his deep and eternal abhorrence of iniquity. Now, this will fulfil the law even more thoroughly than if the consequences of sin had been visited upon the heads of the guilty themselves. “He laid upon him the iniquity of us all!” What a wonderful demonstration was this! Again: It is plain that this condition was indispensably necessary. God, as the governor of the universe, must insist upon something being done to meet the claims of public justice; the dishonoured law must be restored, public justice must be appeased; the spirit of the law must be maintained in all its integrity. Now, there was only one being in the universe qualified to sustain the office. The Lord Jesus Christ was both God and man; he sustained such a relation to both the parties as to be in a position to “magnify the law,” and make it even more honourable than it would have been made by its execution upon mankind. Christ satisfied the claims of public justice, and hence it is said, “he gave himself a ransom for all.” Christ, by his atonement, testified to the manner in which God regarded the sins of man. Again: Our Lord Jesus Christ knew well what it would cost him. I said just now, that one of the conditions of a Mediator’s success must be this: that if the office should call for any sacrifice on his part, he must be fully willing to make it—he must be willing to make any sacrifice, or undergo any degree of self-denial, which may be requisite in the nature of the case. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ knew well what it would cost him. It was no part of his business to compromise the claims of public justice; no part of his business to justify

iniquity, or let down the authority of the law. He knew better what he had to do, than to act thus; and he was willing to do what the office required of him."

(Charles G. Finney, Christ the Mediator)

I cannot say enough about what Jesus Christ did by making Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on the Cross (Philippians 2).

We have access to God the Father through (*dia*) God the Son and we are eternally grateful.

"Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.” Romans 1:8-12

In our last Romans study, we looked at what it means to thank God “through Jesus Christ” and the great truth that Jesus is our great Mediator and Advocate. Christianity truly is a one-of-a-kind worldview.

We now turn to Paul’s statement that the “faith” of the Roman Christians was “spoken of throughout the whole world.” That’s an amazing statement for the Apostle to the Gentiles to make. Why would he say that at the beginning of this letter? What did Paul have in mind as he wrote those words? What did the Roman believers think about what he wrote?

Spiritual Insight

Paul is ‘thankful’ to God for the Roman believers – “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all ...” Paul had many reasons for saying that, even though he had not met them yet (Romans 1:13; 15:22). That raises the question of how these Christians became Christians if not through the ministry of Paul and how he would have known about them.

One possibility might be that some of the “visitors from Rome” (Acts 2:10) who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost may have believed Peter’s message, become followers of Christ, returned to their homes in Rome, and “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). In other words, they continued as followers of Christ after they left Jerusalem and headed back home.

Another possibility might be that Jewish and Gentile followers of Christ journeyed to Rome from other parts of the world since it was the center of the great Roman Empire (see Map). Some of those people may have become Christians through Paul's ministry in other parts of the world (see personal greetings from Paul in Romans 16) or been influenced by Christians who knew Paul.

Some may have visited for a brief time in Rome and shared the Gospel of Christ. Others may have taken up residence in Rome and helped build the church that Paul addressed in his letter. Paul mentioned several assemblies of Christians who met in houses in Rome (e.g. 16:5, 10, 11, 14, 15), so there may not have been any single church 'building' at the time Paul was writing his letter to the Romans. Rome was a big city with a large population, so Christians may have strategically placed themselves across the area to impact more people.

Paul was thankful for the Christians in Rome and wrote "that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." The world of the Roman Empire included much of what we now know as Europe, Britain, North Africa, the Near East and Middle East. Rome was the largest and most important city of the world at that time. Population estimates range from one to four million people with a large percentage made up of poor people and slaves.

The Greek of the second half of Romans 1:8 reads – οτι η πιστις υμων καταγγελλεται εν ολω τω κοσμο. A literal translation – "because the faith of you is being announced in all the world."

The context demonstrates the correct understanding of the word *pistis* (faith) as pertaining to Christianity. Paul has already described himself as a "bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God .. concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 1:1-3) He described the recipients of his letter as "beloved of God, called to be saints." (Romans 1:7)

People who spoke Koine (Common) Greek in the 1st century AD understood the word *pistis* to mean 'strong trust.' The idea was of someone being 'persuaded' to come to trust. *Pistis* came from *peithô* which meant 'to persuade of what is trustworthy, to have confidence.' Being a Christian has nothing to do with 'blind' faith and never did. 'Faith' in Jesus Christ is about having confidence in the evidence of the truth of the Christian Gospel. Christians 'cling to, rely on, trust with confidence' the Gospel because of the evidence for Christianity.

Historical Insight

History may help us understand a bit more about why Paul wrote that the 'faith' of the Roman Christians "is being announced in all the world."

"After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them." Acts 18:1-2

Dates for Paul leaving Athens and traveling to Corinth range from 50 – 52 AD. That's important to note since Roman Emperor Claudius (41 – 54 AD) is known to have expelled Jews from Rome after several years on the throne. Roman historian Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (69-122 AD) wrote about the expulsion in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* (Divus Claudius 25).

"Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome."

It may be that the Christian Gospel concerning Jesus being the Jewish Messiah caused disturbances among Jews in Rome, which led Claudius to expel Jews from Rome. The fact that a Roman historian wrote about the event decades later may support one aspect of Paul's statement that "your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world."

Aquila and Priscilla left Rome and traveled to Corinth where they met Paul and began working with him. Claudius died in 54 AD and Nero became emperor. Historians believe Nero was more favorable to the Jews and treated them better (see Britannica article about Nero). Paul is believed to have written his letter to the Romans about two years later (56-57 AD) from Corinth and his request to "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus" and "the church that is in their house," indicates they had most likely returned to their home in Rome.

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.” Romans 1:8-15

In our last Romans study, we looked at how the ‘faith’ of the Christians living in the city of Rome was ‘spoken of throughout the whole world.’ Rome was the primary city of the great Roman Empire and people from all over the world traveled to and from Rome to experience what the city had to offer.

Today, we’ll look at Paul’s strong desire to visit the Christians in Rome and what he hoped to accomplish there.

“For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.”

Paul’s Witness

Paul opens with a strong statement – μαρτυς γαρ μου εστιν ο θεος – “For witness of me is God.” The word ‘witness’ is a translation of the Greek word – *martus* – used for a judicial witness; someone who would testify to the truth of something they had witnessed. The word ‘martyr’ is a transliteration of *martus* based on the

history of witnesses dying for their testimony. Paul is claiming that God is his witness. Witness to what?

A witness in ancient times had to be 'eligible' to act as a witness. They usually were free men who were not deaf or mentally or morally unstable. Romans believed people could be witnesses to actions and words, but not to intentions. Calling on God as your witness would include actions, words and intentions. Paul was calling on the highest witness possible and the only witness who knew the true heart of every man.

Paul took his relationship with God to even a higher level than a witness to his actions, words and intentions. Paul said of God – “whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son” – ω λατρευω εν τω πνευματι μου εν τω ευαγγελιω του υιου αυτου – ‘whom I serve in the spirit of me in the gospel of the Son of him.’ The word ‘serve’ is the Greek word *latreuo*, which means ‘to worship, to render religious service and homage, offer sacrifices, present offerings. It was used for the work of priests in rendering sacred service to God. The word comes from *latris* – ‘a hired servant’ and carried the idea of someone being qualified to accomplish the task of serving.

Paul used the word ‘gospel’ (ευαγγελιον) 15 times in his letter to the Romans. That’s more than any other letter he wrote or any other writings in the New Testament. The ‘gospel of His Son’ was Paul’s deep passion. He loved God and was devoted to what God was doing in the world—and what God was doing, and is still doing, is the ‘gospel of His Son.’

Paul said that God was his witness ‘that without ceasing’ he made mention of the Romans ‘always’ in his prayers. That’s a strong statement, especially in light of claiming God as his ‘witness.’ Such a claim was a powerful declaration of honesty and would have carried great weight with the Roman believers.

Paul's Desire

Paul's prayerful desire was that 'now at last' he would find a way 'in the will of God' to come to them. Later in the letter, Paul wrote that he had had a 'great desire' for many years to visit them. It demonstrated to the Romans how deeply he cared for them and how much he wanted to be with them.

The next verse gives us great insight into how Paul viewed his calling as an apostle. He longed to see the Christians in Rome so he could 'impart' to them some 'spiritual gift' so they would be 'established.'

The word *metadidomi* (impart) means 'to give a share of, offer so that a change of owner is produced.' Jesus Christ gave apostles to His Church for the purpose of "equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Paul wanted to share with the Romans ('impart') *charisma humin pneumatikon* ('gift to you spiritual'). He will later describe spiritual gifts in more detail (Romans 12), but it appears from verse 11 that he wanted to share something special with them to help 'establish' them .. something he could share with them as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The word 'establish' is *στηριχθηναι* (from *sterizo* – to fix, make fast, set). The idea is to 'fix firmly, strengthen, prop up, support.' Paul looked forward to the day when he would be able to meet with the Roman Christians in person and share with them a *charisma pneumatikon* to strengthen them.

Paul added this to his statement – "that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." This is a beautiful part of the relationship that Christians have with each other. The 'mutual faith' that Christians share in Jesus Christ encourages everyone involved. It's not just the apostles or other gifted leaders of the Church who do the strengthening and establishing. All Christians are built up in their faith as they share their gifts with each other. Paul understood that and was looking forward to being 'encouraged together' with the Roman Christians by their 'mutual faith.'

Christians, we all need each other. God has gifted every believer with spiritual gifts that are intended to encourage and build up other brothers and sisters in Christ.

"Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles." Romans 1:13

Rome was the central city of the Roman Empire, so it would seem natural that the 'Apostle to the Gentiles' would make every effort to spend time in the city preaching the Gospel of Christ. Paul wanted the Christians in Rome to know that he had 'often planned' (προεθεμην – set before, place before, design beforehand, determine before .. from πρό, before, and τίθημι, put, place, set, set) to visit them, but had been 'hindered' (εκωλυθην – prevent, hinder, restrain) from doing so in the past.

Paul's Purpose

Paul said his purpose in going to Rome would be so he might have 'some fruit' among them. The word 'fruit' is καρπον and was used for fruit in both the literal and figurative sense. John the Baptist used the word καρπον in Matthew 3:8 when He told the Pharisees, "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance." Jesus used the word καρπον several times in His famous 'Sermon on the Mount' when He told people to 'beware of false prophets'. He used the word for literal and figurative 'fruit' to help people understand how to identify the good from the bad.

"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them." Matthew 7:16-20

Paul's desire was to go to Rome, invest himself in the lives of the Christians there 'that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.' Paul had seen God do wonderful things in the lives of Gentiles in many cities and wanted to see God do it in Rome.

"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also." Romans 1:14-15

Paul's Debt

Paul said he was a 'debtor' (οφειλετης – under obligation to repay a debt .. from οφείλω, to owe, be indebted, be obligated) to Greeks and barbarians, 'both to wise and to unwise.' Paul was well aware of the calling he had to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and understood it to be something God had entrusted to him.

"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship." 1 Corinthians 9:16-17

It was this deep sense of personal obligation and stewardship that burned within Paul to preach the Gospel to the people 'who are in Rome also.' He was both a 'debtor' and 'ready' (προθυμον – enthusiastically willing, eager .. from πρό, before, and θυμός, passion-driven behavior, strong impulses) to 'preach' (ευαγγελισσασθαι – proclaim good news .. from εὖ, good, well done, and ἄγγελος, messenger, envoy, one who is sent) the 'gospel to you who are in Rome also.' Paul wanted to do in Rome what he had done in so many other Gentile cities – preach the 'good news' of the the grace of God through Christ Jesus the Lord.

On a personal note ... are we any less debtors than Paul?

Our study in the Book of Romans will continue in the next part of this commentary on Chapter 1, verses 16-17.

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