

Romans
Concerning His Son
Romans 1:3-4

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In the 1990's while I was still at Grace to You I had the great privilege to co-author a little gospel tract. If you've seen it around, occasionally we will have some here, it has a black front cover with a little red stop sign on it, and across the front of the tract these words, who do you think I am? That's really the key question isn't it, who do you think I am? You open up the tract and this is how the first part of it reads, "Who do you say that I am? With that brief question Jesus Christ confronted his followers with the most important issue they would ever face. He had spent much time with them and made some bold claims about His identity and authority. Now the time had come for them either to believe or deny His teachings. Who do you say Jesus is? Your response to Him will determine not only your values and lifestyle, but your eternal destiny as well." It's really the key question of your life, who do you say Jesus is?

Well, Paul is going to remind us, in Romans 1, that the gospel is the good news about Him. He is the center of God's good news to us. Let's read it together. Romans 1 beginning in verse 1, down through verse 7,

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendent of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, in this greeting, we've learned that Paul really provides us with three reasons why this letter matters, why it mattered to his first century readers, why it should matter to us as well. We've already looked at one of them completely, and that is, it matters because of who wrote it. It matters because Paul wrote it. He introduces it with his identity, "Paul," and immediately that would've sparked the interest of the Christians in Rome, but then he unfolds his credentials, and in verse 1, there are three specific credentials that he has that makes Romans important for every follower of Jesus Christ.

But there's a second reason that Romans matters, and we've just begun to look at this, and that's because it's about the gospel, not only because Paul wrote it, but because it's about the gospel. And, therefore, if you're a Christian, or if you're not, this letter should matter because it's the good news that God has given us. Notice at the end of verse 1 as Paul transitions from his personal credentials to introduce the theme of his letter, by the way he's nine Greek words into his letter and he gets to the theme of it, his letter, the gospel. He says I'm "set apart for the gospel of God."

The gospel, as we learned at length last week, is the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ to reconcile man to Himself. That's the gospel. It's the good news of what God has done to allow us to know Him, we who once were His enemies. Now, Paul opens this letter by giving a brief outline of some of the important facts about the gospel. The whole letter is about the gospel, but in the introduction he gives us just a thumbnail sketch of some key issues about the gospel. We learned several of these last week. First of all, we saw that the gospel comes from God. Notice the end of verse 1. It is the "gospel," or the good news, "of God." It comes from God. It is, it finds its source in Him. It is an announcement from Him to be believed. It is an invitation from Him to be accepted. It is a command from Him to be obeyed, repent and believe. So, understand then, that the good news comes from God as an announcement, as an invitation, and as a command for us.

Secondly, we learned that the gospel is confirmed by the Old Testament Scripture. Verse 2 says it's the gospel "which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures." This is not something Paul invented. Paul didn't come up with solo fide, justification by faith alone. No, this is something that is true in the Old Testament and its fullness was promised in the Old Testament, and it comes to fruition and reality in the New. It's confirmed by Old Testament Scripture.

And we just touched on this third point last time, really just introduced it. And thirdly, we would say this about the gospel, the gospel is about God's Son. The gospel is about God's Son. We see this in verses 3 and 4. Notice how verse 3 begins. It is "the gospel of God" verse 1 says, verse 3, "concerning his Son." So it comes from God, this good news, and the good news is about God's Son. Jesus is the good news. Look down at verse 9, "For God, whom I serve in my spirit and the preaching of the gospel of His Son." That doesn't mean it comes from the Son, it means it's about the Son. What He did is the gospel.

Turn over to Romans 5:10. There are a lot of places to look, let me just highlight a couple of them. Romans 5:10. "if while we were enemies," to God, "we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Jesus and what He did is the good news. Romans 8:3,

what the law could not do, weak as it was because of our flesh, God did: He sent His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He

condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

The gospel is Jesus and what He did.

Now, that's what makes sense of comments by a couple of the reformers. When you look at Romans 1:4, Luther, commenting on that verse said this, verses 3 and 4, actually, he says, "Here the door is thrown open wide for the understanding of Holy Scripture." That is, everything in the Scripture must be understood in relation to Christ. The Old Testament said He's coming, the gospel said He came, and here's what He said and did while He was here. The epistles say here's what it means, and Revelation says He's coming again. Everything, ultimately, is about Him. John Calvin, similarly, wrote this, "This is a remarkable passage by which we are taught that the whole gospel is included in Christ, so that if anyone removes one step from Christ he withdraws himself from the gospel."

The gospel is about God's son. It's about who He is and what He accomplished in order to reconcile us to the Father. Now, verses 3 and 4 are absolutely filled with rich and profound theology, both about the nature of the God we worship and the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the parallelism in the language of verses 3 and 4 in the original language, many scholars suspect that Paul here is quoting from an ancient creed, and the language does have a poetic quality to it. We can't be sure, but that's certainly possible. But what is true is this, in just these two verses, verses 3 and 4, Paul alludes to countless realities about Christ. Let me just give you a little list. In these verses he exposes us, either directly or indirectly, to the preexistence of Christ, that He existed prior to Bethlehem, to His divine nature, His birth and incarnation, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His future reign as David's descendent and as Messiah. All of that within these two verses. Now, as we unpack all that's here, I want to do so looking at these verses in line with four truths about this Son in whom the gospel centers. Four truths about the Son.

First of all, notice His divine nature, verse 3, it is the gospel "concerning His," or God's "Son." Now this is so commonplace among those who profess faith in Christ, that I'm afraid it becomes pedestrian, it becomes ordinary. I want you to, for a moment, assume that you had never heard what this verse teaches, and I want you to think about this: at the foundation of the Christian gospel is this extraordinary, incredible, unbelievable claim, and that is that Jesus of Nazareth, a real human being who lived in a place and time in human history, is God's eternal Son. That's what the gospel teaches.

Now notice the order that Paul lays out here, it's the gospel "concerning His Son," and then that Son "was born a descendent of David according to the flesh." and that Son, verse 4, was then declared to be "the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." Do you see the order? Jesus was God's Son before His birth, and before His death, and before His resurrection. He was the Son before all of that transpired. In fact, He was, and is, God's eternal Son. There

are a number of passages that give us that concept, but Hebrews 1, we read together this morning, says that God has, “in these last days spoken to us by His Son,” and then it says this about the Son, “through whom He made the worlds.” It was the Son of God who created everything, without Him nothing was made that was made, John tells us. He is the eternal Son. Let me put it like this, He was God's Son before there was anything but God, He is God's Son, He will always be God's eternal Son. So that means then that the eternal relationship between the first member of the Trinity and the second member of the Trinity is that of father and son.

Now as soon I say that we can be in trouble as human beings because we only know the father son relationship at a human level, and so it can lead us astray. So let me tell you some things that the father son relationship, as it describes the nature of God, does not imply. First of all, that they are father and son does not imply that the father existed before the son, as is true with human fathers and human sons, nor does it imply, as Mormonism teaches, that the son is the product of a sexual union between the father and a woman, nor does the father son relationship imply that they are not equal in power and authority. As we'll see in a moment, exactly the opposite is true.

So why then would God teach us to think of the relationship between the first member of the Trinity and the second member of the Trinity as father and son? What do we learn from that? Well, really we learn two truths about the relationship they have. First of all, there is complete equality between the first member of the Trinity and the second member of the Trinity. Complete equality between Father and Son. To say that Jesus is the Son of God is to say that He is God the Son. Let me say that again. To say that Jesus is the Son of God is to say that He is God the Son, that He is completely and totally equal in every way.

Let me show you several passages, or a couple passages, turn to Mark 14. Mark 14, it's the trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus appears there, false witnesses are bought and brought and their testimony, verse 59 of Mark 14, they couldn't get their own story straight, even though they were paid witnesses. And so, in the end, verse 60, the high priest Caiaphas stood up and came forward and he questions Jesus directly. This was not to be done by the way, this is a breach of legal protocol. He says, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” Verse 61, “But Jesus kept silent and did not answer. Again, the high priest was questioning Him.” Matthew tells us he put Him under oath, “and he said to Him, ‘Are you the Christ,’” are you the Christos, the Messiah, “‘the Son of the Blessed One?’” Are you the Son of God? “Jesus said, ‘I am.’” No equivocation there. Are you the Messiah? I put you under oath, are you the Messiah? Are you claiming to be the person the Old Testament prophesied and are you claiming to be the Son of the Blessed One, the Son of God, is that what you're claiming? To which Jesus says “I am,” and just in case they missed “I am” and what that means, He quotes from two messianic passages and He applies them to Himself, verse 62, “you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” Psalm 110, Daniel 7, He says, those Old Testament passages about Messiah apply to Me. Yes I am.

Now, notice the response, they got what He was claiming. When He said I am the Son of God, He was claiming to be God the Son, and they understood this. Verse 63,

Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? You’ve heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?” And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

You see for Him to say I am the Son of the Blessed One is to make Himself equal to God. It's a claim to be God, and if it's not true it is blasphemy and in the first century Judaism was deserving of death.

Turn to John 5. In some ways this is an even clearer passage, John 5:16. Jesus has healed a man, a lame man. Unfortunately for Him, it's on the Sabbath and the Pharisees are not happy, they are not happy campers at this point, verse 16,

For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, “My Father” [*notice how He doesn't say our Father. He's claiming a special relationship.*] “My Father,” [*God,*] “is working until now, and I Myself am working.”

You see what He's saying? He's saying, God, I have a unique relationship with God as my Father and He works on the Sabbath so I'm working on the Sabbath. This was a clear claim to deity. Again they understood it, verse 18, “For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath,” but note this, “but also was calling God His own Father,” His unique, He had a unique relationship with Him in which He was Son and God was Father, and here's what that meant to them, “making Himself equal with God.” To be God, to be the Son of God, was to be God the Son, and so understand then that when we are taught to think of the first and the second member of the Trinity as having the relationship of father and son, it is telling us that they are exactly equal.

But it's also telling us something more. Although there is perfect equality of being between them, the second person of the Trinity forever submits Himself to the first member of the Trinity. That's why the father son relationship is their relationship and it perfectly portrays the nature of it because they are perfectly equal, and yet the second member of the Trinity forever submits Himself to the first member of the Trinity. This was true in the incarnation. If you're still there in John 5, look at verse 30, “I can do nothing on My own initiative because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.” Jesus says, listen, I don't do anything except what the Father tells Me to do, I submit Myself to Him and His plan.

You say, okay, yeah, but that was the incarnation, what about now, or in the future, or even in eternity past? Well, we get a great glimpse of that in 1 Corinthians 15:28. There Paul says, in the future when Jesus has defeated all of His enemies, the last enemy being death, when death is

destroyed, here's what will happen. 1 Corinthians 15:28, "When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him," that is the Father, "so that God may be all in all." Eternally, the Father will be in the position of authority and eternally the Son, although perfectly equal in every way, will submit Himself to the first member of the Trinity. Hence, Father and Son. So Jesus Christ, then, is the eternal Son of God, He is God the Son. By the way, look back in Romans 1 because here we see the brilliance of the Spirit of God, because within three verses He introduces us to the nature of God, that God is a Trinity. Notice verse 1. It is the "gospel of God," there's the first person of the Trinity, verse 3 "concerning His Son," there's the second person of the Trinity, verse 4, "the Spirit of holiness," there's the third person of the Trinity. All three persons of the Trinity are at work in the gospel, and, in fact, the nature of God as Trinity is part of the core of the gospel.

So, Jesus has a divine nature, but there's a second truth about Him in this passage in Romans 1. Not only does He have a divine nature, but let's look secondly at His human nature. Verse 3 goes on to say, "concerning His Son, who was born of a descendent of David according to the flesh." The One who was eternally God the Son, was born. There's another one of those shocking statements that should be shocking to us. This emphasizes that the eternal Son of God, God the Son, became an actual historical human being. Scripture makes this clear in so many places, listen to Paul in Galatians 4:4, "when the fullness of the time came," when everything was just the way God wanted it, "God sent forth His Son," there you get that idea of the Son being preexistent. He didn't come into being in Bethlehem. "God sent forth His Son, to be born of a woman." Jesus was born. He became fully human. He became a man of history who lived in a particular time in a particular place.

Notice verse 3, specifically Paul says Jesus "was born of a descendent of David." In His humanity, Jesus was born into David's line, He was a descendent of David. Now why is that important? Why would that be a part of Paul's gospel? Because the Old Testament is clear that the Messiah would be a physical descendent of David. To qualify to be the Messiah you had to be in David's line. Let's look at just a couple of passages where this point is made. Look at 2 Samuel 7. 2 Samuel 7, here is the Davidic covenant, the unilateral, unconditional, legally binding promise God makes David. 2 Samuel 7:12,

when your days are complete, and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendent after you who will come forth from you," [*that's Solomon,*] "and I will establish his kingdom. He will build a house for my name, [*now here we leave Solomon and we go into the future,*] and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

In other words, there will be a descendent of Solomon who will always be king. This becomes, I think, even clearer for us in Psalm 89. Psalm 89:3. God is speaking here and He says,

“I have made a covenant with My chosen; I've sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever and build up your throne to all generations.”

In Isaiah, it becomes clear that this forever king is going to be the Messiah. Listen to Isaiah 9, the familiar prophecy. Isaiah 9:6, “For a child would be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders.” Verse 7, “There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it from then on and forevermore.” So understand, then, that the Old Testament said Messiah would come in the line of David, and He would rule forever.

So to meet the biblical qualifications to be the Messiah, Jesus had to be in David's line, and so the New Testament authors make much of Jesus's connection to David. Look at Matthew 1:1, “The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David.” He's the Messiah because He's in the line of David. Turn to Luke 1. Luke 1:27, Gabriel shows up to Mary to announce the birth of Christ, “to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph,” and he was “of the descendants of David.” Verse 32, Gabriel says to Mary, your Son's going to be great, He

“will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

He is going to be the one that was promised to David, who would be king forever. In Luke 2:4, as we hear about Joseph, he “went up from Galilee, to the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem.” Why? “Because Joseph was of the house and family of David.”

Even the people of Israel who weren't sure if Jesus was the Messiah or not, they got this. They got that He would be, ultimately, one of David's sons. In John 7:42, while they're debating whether or not Jesus is really the Messiah, they say this, “Has not the Scripture said that the Messiah comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” That's why when you come to Paul's testimony in 2 Timothy 2:8, he says. “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendent of David, according to my gospel.” It had to be part of the gospel, because He couldn't be the Messiah if He wasn't from David's line.

Now, here's where God's amazing providence comes in, because to make it clear that Jesus met this requirement, not just one of His parents was a descendent of David, both of them were. In Matthew 1 we have the genealogy of Joseph, and Joseph's lineage came from David through David's son Solomon. The legal claim that Jesus had to the throne came through his adoptive father, Joseph. Luke 3 on the other hand traces the genealogy of Jesus through Mary, and there we learn that Mary was a descendent of David, not through Solomon, but through an older brother named Nathan. And so, Jesus had a physical claim to the throne through Mary. So Jesus then was born a descendent of David, there's no question about it, legally, through Joseph as His

adoptive father, and physically through Mary, His mother. So Jesus was twice qualified to be the Messiah. He was twice a son of David.

Now, go back to Romans 1 and notice the fascinating way that Paul finishes verse 3. He says He “was born of a descendent of David according to the flesh.” “According to the flesh.” Paul uses the Greek word translated flesh in a variety of ways. He uses it of the fallen human nature, of the physical body. He also uses it, as he does here, to simply mean human nature. Jesus was born a descendent of David, as it pertains to His human nature. Now, if Jesus were only human there was no need for Paul to add that line. I mean, he could have simply said He was born a descendent of David. I mean, if I were to say to you, I am a descendent of Fred Pennington, you wouldn't think anything about that, but if I said I am a descendent of Fred Pennington, according to my human nature. You'd be shocked, you'd also have a new pastor pretty soon, because I would be saying that I'm more than merely human. And that's exactly what Paul was saying.

Paul's point is that the second person of the Trinity, God's eternal Son, continued to be truly and completely God, but in verse 3, He was born. He added to Himself a full and complete human nature, as the creeds say, a true body and a reasonable soul, fully human. And so, He becomes, and you see this written sometimes, the God hyphen man, the God-man. In other words, fully God, at the same time, fully man. By the way, that's still who He is, He still possesses not only His divine nature, but His human nature. His body is now not the weak body that it was when He was here, given to weakness and hunger and thirst and all of those things, it's a glorified body, but He is still fully human. He is everything today that you are, except for sin, and yet He's more. He is the God-man, and He will forever be the God-man. Do see what Paul is doing here? Paul told the Romans that the gospel he preached was about the eternal Son of God who became a human being and who was born into the physical line of David, so the incarnation then is part of the true gospel. If you don't believe that Jesus was God's eternal Son, come in the flesh, born of the line of David, so that He meets the qualifications of the Messiah, you are not, you cannot be, a true Christian. In fact, John the apostle says this in 1 John 4:2,

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

So, when we look at the truths about this Son in whom the gospel centers, we see His divine nature, we see His human nature.

Thirdly, we see His ultimate vindication, His ultimate vindication. Look at verse 4, “who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness.” Now this phrase describes another event from the earthly life of God's eternal Son. Verse 3, we had His birth, the incarnation, here we have His death and resurrection. Paul says the eternal Son was declared to be the Son. Now what does that mean? Well, the Greek word

translated declared is a word you will recognize because it's been brought into English. The Greek word is horizo, from which we get our English word horizon. It describes a line of demarcation, like the horizon, that marks off the sky from the land. The resurrection of Jesus literally, from out of the dead ones, is what it says in the Greek text, His resurrection from out of the dead ones marked Him off. It drew a line of demarcation dividing Him from everyone else. On one side are all the normal human beings. On the other side there's only one. Jesus was a human being, but He was so much more, and by His resurrection He was divided from all other human beings, because through the work of what's called here the Spirit of holiness, probably a Hebraism referring to the Holy Spirit, Jesus was marked out, He was determined to be, He was declared to be, the Son of God with power.

Before Bethlehem He was the eternal Son, and during His earthly life He never ceased being the Son of God, but during His earthly life He was given to weakness and frailty. He had to go to sleep in the back of the boat because He was so fatigued. He thirsted, He had to sleep at night. He was given to all of those human weaknesses, obviously apart from sin, but the resurrection marked Him out as the Son of God with power. He was invested with power. That's the idea.

Before the resurrection He was in what theologians call the state of humiliation, characterized by weakness, as we sing at Christmas time that Wesley hymn, "veiled in flesh the Godhead see," that's who He was. But after the resurrection He came to a state of exaltation characterized not by weakness, but by power. That's why, when, after the resurrection, He comes to Galilee and He interacts with the five hundred disciples there in Galilee, He says to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." William Hendrickson writes, "From all eternity He was the Son of God, but during His period of humiliation His power in its fullest degree was hidden from view. By means of His glorious resurrection, His investiture with power began to shine forth in all its glory." You see, at the time of Jesus resurrection, His ascension, His being seated at the right hand of God, He was coronated, not as the Son of God, which He had always been, but as the God-man. Through His perfect human life He had earned the right to the throne.

That's why in Acts 2 when Peter's talking about the resurrection on the day of Pentecost, he says, in light of the resurrection, verse 36, "let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Messiah - this Jesus whom you crucified." In Philippians 2, He says "He humbled Himself," "He humbled Himself," "He humbled Himself." Therefore "God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." That's not the name Jesus. It's the name Lord, Kurios, Master, Sovereign. He earned it by His obedience. Acts 13:33, Paul says, "God has fulfilled the promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.'"

You see the resurrection was like Jesus's coronation. Think of it like this, a new child is born in the kingly line. As a baby that child is the heir to the throne. He is the king. But let's assume for a moment that that king decides to leave the palace and live and grow up among his subjects

incognito. He looks like everybody else, he's with them, they might not know who he really is, but then the day comes of his coronation. He walks up those steps. He sits on the throne. The crown is placed on his head. He is pronounced as king. Everyone falls down and acknowledges that he is king. There's no question then that he is, in fact, the king. He always had been, but not everybody knew or recognized it until his coronation. That's what the resurrection was to Jesus.

Lewis Berkof writes, "Christ was formally invested with this kingship over the universe, when He was exalted at the right hand of God. It was a promised reward of His labors. This investiture was part of the exaltation of the God-man." Listen carefully, this is really important. "It did not," His coronation, after His resurrection, "did not give Him any power or authority which He did not already possess as the Son of God." He was the Son of God, for goodness sake. He already had all authority as the Son of God, but Berkof goes on to say, "nor did it increase His territory." It's not like Jesus got new land that He didn't have before. But the God-man, the Mediator, was now made the possessor of this authority and His human nature was made to share in the glory of His royal dominion. As the God-man, He was given the right to rule, a right He earned in His earthly life and in His death.

Now, why did Jesus's resurrection prove Him to be the Son of God, when the resurrection of others like Lazarus didn't prove them to be the Son of God? There's two reasons, first of all, because Jesus Himself staked everything He said and did on His resurrection. You remember early in His ministry, in John 2, He cleansed the Temple for the first time and the leaders came to Him and said, what right do you have to do this? By whose authority are you doing this? And what was His response? "Destroy this temple," speaking of His body, "and in three days I will raise it up." He said, listen, here's my authority, don't believe a word I've said, don't trust anything I've done, I don't have any authority to act, if I'm not three days coming out of the tomb.

But secondly, there's another reason that Jesus's resurrection proves who He is, because He raised Himself from the dead. In that same text He says, "Destroy this temple," and what? "I will raise it up." Yes, the Father raised Jesus, but Jesus also raised Himself. There has been nobody else who's ever died who has raised himself from the dead. It declared Him to be the Son of God with power. By the way, verse 4 makes it clear that both the death and the resurrection of Christ are integral to the gospel, as we'll learn as we go through this letter.

There's one final truth about this amazing Son in whom the gospel centers. Notice at the end of verse 4, His personal identity, "Jesus Christ our Lord." Here's the Son, He's identified for us. The unique person of whom Paul has been speaking is "Jesus Christ our Lord." "Jesus," that's His personal name. It's the name Gabriel commanded Joseph to give Him in Matthew 1:21, "call Him Jesus," which means Yeshua, which means Yahweh saves, Yahweh rescues, because "He will save His people from their sins." So, the name Jesus reminds us that He was a human being, an historical person, who was sent to "save His people from their sins." Christ, Christ is a title, not a name, it means the anointed one. It's the Messiah, the Messiah promised in the Old

Testament Scripture, “Jesus Christ our Lord.” That’s His position, “our Lord.” As Douglas Moo points out, “For Paul the word ‘Lord’ expresses both Jesus’s cosmic majesty over everything, and His individual right to rule you and me.” He is Lord, He is our Master, our Sovereign. He owns me. He has the right to rule me. To Him I must be personally committed, I must give my full allegiance and my obedience.

Now let me pull it all together. Understand this, apart from Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son, there is no salvation. He is the gospel, and it's impossible to understand the gospel apart from an understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. That includes His preexistence, His incarnation, His death, His resurrection, and His coronation as Messiah and Lord. To be a genuine Christian you must repent and believe the true biblical gospel that Paul preached. That gospel includes trusting the one true God who revealed Himself as Yahweh, who exists eternally in three co-equal yet distinct persons, whom Jesus taught us to call Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You understand that the identity and the nature of God is part of the true gospel? The God of Oneness Pentecostals like T.D. Jakes is not God, so what they teach can't truly be the gospel. But the nature of Jesus is also part of the true gospel. You must believe that the Son of God always existed as God with a divine nature, but who, without any change to that divine nature, took on Himself a full and complete humanity, a human nature, in consisting of body and soul. So the Jesus of the Jehovah's Witnesses, a created being, who is not equal with God, is not God, and the gospel they teach cannot be the true gospel. The Jesus of the Mormons, the physical offspring of God and a woman, is not the eternal Son of God, therefore what they teach cannot be the true gospel.

You must believe in the true biblical Jesus, you must believe what He did. You must believe as Paul outlines here that He died, as we learn in other places, and later in this letter, for our sins, and was buried, and on the third day He and the Father together raised Him from the dead, forever validating His claims to be the Messiah and God the Son. You must believe that He is Jesus, a person of history who came to save His people from their sins. You must believe that He's the promised Messiah of the Old Testament Scriptures, and you must be willing to believe all of that as cold historical fact.

But that's not enough. You must also believe in Jesus, to the extent that you are willing to relinquish all personal sovereignty, all personal right to rule, and you must bow before Him acknowledging Him from that day and forever to have the right to be your Lord and Master, and to tell you what you ought to do. You see the center of the gospel is God's Son. Let me ask you, honestly, is He the center of your faith? Or do you have what's really common in American Christianity, do you have this sort of common, generic, faith in God, and Jesus Christ rarely comes into your thinking, into your words, or into your actions. Listen, if your faith is not centered in Jesus Christ, then you are not a Christian, because He is the gospel, He is Christianity.

As one writer put it, “The person and work of Christ are the rock upon which the Christian religion is built. If He is not who He said He was, and if He did not do what He said He’d come to do, the foundation is undermined and the whole superstructure will collapse. Take Christ from Christianity, and you disembowel it; there is practically nothing left. Christ is the center of Christianity; all else is circumference.” May that be true of my life, and of your life. May He be the center and everything else circumference. It's the gospel concerning God's Son. Let's pray together.

Our Father, we cry out that You would seal these remarkable truths to our hearts. Lord, may we believe them both as cold hard facts of history, but may we also believe them to the extent that we relinquish our personal right to rule, our personal sovereignty, and we bow to His right to rule us. Father, I pray for those of us in Christ, that You would cause us, as a result of what we've studied together today, to love Him more, to long to follow Him more closely, to obey Him more faithfully, to speak of Him more openly. And Father I pray for those here this morning who have not yet acknowledged His right to rule them. May this be the day when they respond to the gospel, the good news which is Jesus and what He did to reconcile them to You. Father may they come to know You today through Him. We pray in Jesus's name, amen.