

A Study in the Book of Romans

3

Romans 1:2

Key Verse

“...the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures...”

The word “gospel” is the key word in **Romans**. You will find it used by Paul continually, and here we find it repeated in both the first and second verses of his letter! This alone should signal us that the subject matter of **Romans** is going to be the glorious Gospel of Christ.

As we have discovered in **Module 102**, the word “gospel” literally means “good news.” It is the good news that complete forgiveness and deliverance from sin and its eternal consequences are now available to every individual, regardless of race or nationality. **Ephesians 1:7** tells us:

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.”

The Message takes Paul’s original words even further:

“Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we’re a free people – free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. *Abundantly* free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making.”

Simply put, the Gospel declares that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, bore sin and its punishment on the Cross *instead of us!* Peter summarizes the core of the Gospel

▶	Introduction	◀
	The Gospel’s Three Revelations	
	The Gospel’s Three Answers	
	The Gospel’s Answer to Israel	
	The Gospel in Action	
	Conclusion	

message when he writes in **1 Peter 3:18**:

“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God...”

But even more than that, as astounding as the sacrificial death of Christ upon the Cross means for us, God went one step further. For he brought his Son back to life to be the firstborn of a whole new creation of people who would be just like him. In the *New Living Translation*, **Romans 8:29** declares:

“For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters.”

Simple faith in these facts sets us free from sin and causes us to come alive in the spirit as sons of God. In **John 3:3**, Jesus describes this event as being “born again” and in **John 1:12**, the *New Living Translation* explains exactly what takes place:

“But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan – this rebirth comes from God.”

Such is the power of the Cross, each believer in Christ is given a very special promise in **John 3:36**:

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life...”

This is the Gospel that Paul preached, the Gospel for which he had been set apart! If you would like to see a summary of Paul’s Gospel message, read these two passages:

- **Ephesians 2:1-10**
- **Colossians 1:21-23**

But in **Romans 1:1-2**, Paul tells us something very special about this Gospel. He tells us that is a Gospel “promised beforehand.”

Promised Beforehand

The Gospel was no new and impulsive idea that God was suddenly introducing to the world. It was no message thought up by man as a great idea to solve his problems. It had been planned and prepared by God from the very beginning of time. It was “promised *beforehand*.” Long before it was announced to the world, the Gospel had been:

- Promised by God from the very moment of man’s first sin.
- Foretold by the prophets down through history.
- Pre-pictured through types and shadows in every book of the Bible.

Let’s take a look at these three ways that God “promised beforehand” the coming good news of the Gospel.

Promised by God

God's plan of salvation was revealed the moment sin first entered into the life of man. Speaking to the serpent that had lured them into rebellion, the Lord himself brought the first Gospel message. **Genesis 3:15** announces:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

The crushing of the serpent's offspring and the striking of the woman's offspring took place on the Cross of Calvary. The serpent of **Genesis 3:15** is identified in **Revelation 12:9** as Satan himself. Satan's "head" was crushed through the transaction that took place in Jesus' death upon the Cross. The head speaks of authority (see **Ephesians 5:23**). Through his surrender to sin, Adam had given Satan rightful authority over him and all his descendants. Through the death of Jesus, representing mankind, that authority was broken, and man was set free from Satan's power. The crushing of the head also speaks of a total and permanent disabling. It is a mortal wound from where there is no recovery. The victory of the Cross over Satan was a total victory.

On the Cross, however, Jesus' "heel" was struck. The heel is the lowest part of the body – the part that touches the earth – and it speaks of how God humbled himself and became a man to suffer and die for us. J. B. Phillips, in *The New Testament in Modern English*, translates **Philippians 2:8** in this way:

“For he...stripped himself of all privilege by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born as a mortal man. And, having become man, he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, and the death he died was the death of a common criminal.”

But the incredible news is that the striking of the heel is not a mortal wound! Jesus could not be held down by death!

And so, from the very dawn of time, the Gospel has been preached. It was promised by God himself!

Foretold by the prophets

God continued to proclaim the promised Gospel down through Old Testament history, using men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak for him. As **1 Peter 1:10-12** says:

“Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven...”

These prophets foretold the coming of the Savior in minute detail:

- ☞ His deity (**Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18**)
- ☞ His human ancestry (**Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:33-34**)
- ☞ His birth (**Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1**)
- ☞ His character (**Isaiah 11:2; Luke 2:52**)
- ☞ His ministry (**Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-21**) as a Prophet (**Deuteronomy 18:15; John 6:14**) and Priest (**Psalms 110:4; Hebrews 6:20**)
- ☞ His impact on Galilee (**Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:12-16**)
- ☞ His triumphant entry into Jerusalem (**Zechariah 9:9; John 12:13-14**)
- ☞ His betrayal by a friend (**Psalms 41:9; Mark 14:10**) for 30 pieces of silver (**Zechariah 11:12-13; Matthew 26:15; 27:6-7**)
- ☞ His rejection (**Isaiah 53:3; John 1:11**)
- ☞ His trial and the false witnesses (**Psalms 27:12; Matthew 26:60-61**)
- ☞ His silence (**Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 26:62-63**)
- ☞ His beating (**Isaiah 50:6; Mark 14:65**)
- ☞ His crucifixion (**Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38**)
- ☞ His mocking (**Psalms 22:6-8; Matthew 27:39-40**)
- ☞ His pierced side (**Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34**)
- ☞ His lack of broken bones (**Psalms 34:20; John 19:33**)
- ☞ His clothes gambled for by soldiers (**Psalms 22:18; Mark 15:24**)
- ☞ His death *for us* (**Isaiah 53:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:14**)
- ☞ His burial (**Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 28:9**)
- ☞ His resurrection (**Psalms 16:10; Acts 2:27-32**)
- ☞ His ascension (**Psalms 68:18; Luke 24:50-51**)
- ☞ His authority (**Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 28:18-20**)
- ☞ His results (**Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:14-17**)

This is why, after the resurrection, “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Christ] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (**Luke 24:27**). And in **Acts 3:18**, Peter was able to declare:

“But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.”

Pre-pictured in types and shadows

Not only did God foretell the Gospel in the Old Testament Scriptures through the ministry of prophets, but he also pre-pictured the Gospel in the written history of Israel.

Read Romans 15:4

In **1 Corinthians 10:11** *Young’s Literal Translation* explains the value of Old Testament history:

“And all these things *as types* did happen to those persons, and they were written for our admonition, to whom the end of the ages did come.”

The historical events, individual experiences and religious ceremonies of Israel are all recorded to act as a pre-picture of the work of Christ in his death and resurrection and of its effect on the believer.

Let's take a look at some examples:

Abel (Genesis 4:1-7)

Abel's offering was accepted by God because he had shed the blood of a lamb as a substitute for himself. He was expressing to God that he was a sinner, deserving of judgment.

Read Hebrews 11:4

Cain's offering, on the other hand, was not accepted because he offered the work of his own hands (the harvest of his labor in the fields), and in doing so was denying the fact that he was a sinner and unworthy to come into the presence of a holy God.

Read Jude 11

From the beginning of time, God ordained the sacrifice of a substitute lamb as the only way to receive forgiveness of sin and acceptance by God. He instructed the Levites in **Leviticus 17:11**:

“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.”

The lamb pre-pictured the Lord Jesus who would die once and for all as the substitute for all mankind.

Read John 1:29

Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-14)

Read Hebrews 11:17-19

This scripture reveals that when Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice it was a pre-picture of Jesus being offered as a sacrifice upon the Cross. Abraham, the father, offers Isaac, his beloved only begotten son (born by a miracle), as a sacrifice (see **Genesis 21:5-7; 22:2; John 3:16; Luke 1:26-33**). Isaac carries the wood for the burnt offering (**Genesis 2:6**), just as Jesus would carry the wooden cross upon which he would be crucified (**John 19:17**). Abraham then receives Isaac back “from the dead” as a picture of the Resurrection (**Genesis 22:10-12; Luke 24:1-8,51; John 20:17**).

Passover (Exodus 12:1-33)

The killing of the lamb and the placing of its blood upon the doorposts of the house so that the Angel of Death would “pass over” them – all this painted a picture of what Christ would do on the Cross for us. This act set Israel free from slavery to

Pharaoh in Egypt and, under their deliverer, Moses, brought them into a whole new life, and eventually to the Promised Land. The Cross sets us free from slavery to Satan in the world and, under our Deliverer, Jesus, we receive a whole new life with all the joys of heaven ours to experience.

Israel was “baptized into Moses” (**1 Corinthians 10:1-4**). The Red Sea separated them from Egypt and was like a “death” experience to their old way of life. Coming up on the other side was like their resurrection to a new life with God. All this was recorded as a pre-picture of the Christian’s experience. We are baptized into Christ (**Romans 6:3-5**). Baptism, for us, represents the burial of our old life, and our rising to walk in a new life with God (**Colossians 2:12**).

As J. B. Phillips translates **1 Corinthians 5:7**:

“We Christians have had a Passover Lamb sacrificed for us – none other than Christ Himself!”

The Brass Serpent (Numbers 21:4-9)

The people of Israel, bitten by poisonous snakes while traveling through the wilderness, found healing by looking on the Brass Serpent which Moses put on a pole and lifted before them. In **John 3:14-15**, Jesus said:

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

The Sacrifices of the Law (Leviticus 6:1-7)

Israel was given strict instructions by the Lord concerning the sacrifices to be offered for their sins. The altar of the Temple flowed constantly with the blood of lambs, goats and bulls offered as sacrificial substitutes for the sinner. **1 Peter 1:18-20** tells us:

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”

Jonah (Matthew 12:38-40)

The Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus to show them a miraculous sign to prove he was the Messiah. Jesus told them the experience of the prophet Jonah was their sign! In **Matthew 12:40**, he says:

“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Jonah’s experience pre-pictured the work of the Lord Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection.

The Tabernacle

Read Hebrews 8:5

Read Hebrews 9:7-14

As we saw in **Module 107**, the Tabernacle is a complex type that foreshadows the Gospel of Christ. The compartments and the furniture each illustrate aspects of our salvation in Christ. So important was this pre-picture, God gave Moses explicit instructions: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain.” As Paul declares in **Colossians 2:17**:

“These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”

Read also Hebrews 10:1

Thus Paul’s declaration – that “the gospel [was] promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures” – is indeed true. The Gospel had been promised in word and picture form throughout the whole of Old Testament history. In the rest of his letter to the Romans, Paul will soon open up the full meaning of that Gospel in all its glorious detail.