

A Study in the Book of Romans

4

Romans 1:2-4

Key Verse

“...the gospel...regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The message of the Gospel centers in a Person, Jesus Christ, without whom the good news it declares could never become valid. In **Romans 1:3**, Paul reveals the two relationships of the Lord Jesus Christ that are the key factors to the Gospel’s message. These two relationships are encapsulated in two titles that Paul gives Jesus:

- ➔ God’s Son
- ➔ Our Lord

Let’s take a closer look at these two titles and the relationships they represent.

Christ’s divine relationship

The title “his Son” speaks of his relationship to God, his Father. Jesus was no ordinary man. He was the Son of God, who had known the love and fellowship of his Father through all eternity. John describes this relationship in **John 1:1-2**:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”

The glorious declaration of the Gospel is: Jesus is God’s Son!

Introduction
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Christ's human relationship

The title “Our Lord” speaks of his relationship to us, his people. He is not an austere or aloof God, with no interest in the world he has created. No, he cares about our lives, and willingly became involved with us in our greatest need.

The glorious declaration of the Gospel is: Jesus Christ is our Lord!

The Link

The name given to him – Jesus Christ – is the link that makes “God’s Son” “our Lord.” At his conception, the angel Gabriel announced that the Name of the promised Savior would be “Jesus” (**Luke 1:26-38**). He was given this Name because it describes his whole purpose for coming:

- The name “Jesus” means “Savior” (**Matthew 1:21**)
- The title “Christ” means “Anointed” (**John 1:41**)

In the Old Testament, oil was poured on the head of the one chosen to be used by God. This anointing with oil was a symbol of the Holy Spirit coming on him to enable him to fulfil the task God had given him. Down through the ages, however, Israel had been waiting for *the* Anointed One – the One especially sent from God, filled with the Holy Spirit, to fulfil the task of bringing salvation to Man.

In **Luke 4:18-21**, Jesus made a statement that staggered his hearers. Before all the congregation in the synagogue* of the town where he grew up, he read from **Isaiah 61:1-2**:

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor...”

Then, while all watched him, he declared:

“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing!”

You must remember that to the people of Israel, Jesus was familiar. They had watched him grow. He was seen in their marketplaces each day. He was the local carpenter, who had helped build their houses, or fixed their tables. Yet here he was, on a Sabbath morning, reading from the scroll of Isaiah a passage which prophesied of the coming Messiah. His interpretation of that passage was nothing less than: “I am the ‘Anointed One’ of whom Isaiah was speaking!”

Jesus was indeed anointed by God, but he was anointed for a specific purpose:

To bring good news to the poor

See Isaiah 61:1

See Luke 4:18

* A synagogue is a Jewish place of gathering for prayer and instruction in God’s Law.

The “poor” refers not to so much to those who are lacking in material goods, but rather to those who are downtrodden and oppressed. While physical poverty is included, Jesus specifically referred to those who were “poor in spirit” (**Matthew 5:3**) – those lacking in spiritual life. Jesus had come to bring them good news – the “Gospel.” Paul enlarges on in **2 Corinthians 8:9**:

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

The good news to the poor is the essence of the Gospel – those who have absolutely nothing are given, through God’s grace, everything that Christ has! The richness of the mercies of God in Christ has been made available to each person!

The good news to the poor in spirit is now unfolds in the rest of the prophecy that Jesus declared was fulfilled in him:

To bind up the brokenhearted

See Isaiah 61:1

The Lord ministers healing to the brokenhearted – those whose hearts have been wounded and broken by the circumstances of life. **Psalms 147:3** says:

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

A broken heart is caused through a severed relationship. The greatest of all broken relationships is the one between man and God. Sin had severed our relationship with God, but Jesus came to heal that relationship and bind us together again. **Ephesians 2:12-23** explains:

“...remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.”

To proclaim freedom to the captives

See Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18

The term “captives” refers to those defeated in warfare, now exiles from their own land, under the control of their conquerors. It pictures what had happened to man, who through sin had come under Satan’s power. Jesus came to set us free! His death on our behalf, and His resurrection, broke Satan’s legal right to our lives. Jesus proclaimed us legally free!

And release for the prisoners

See Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18

The term “captive” speaks of the general condition of a defeated nation – in this case referring to the general condition of mankind under Satan’s control. But a

man is usually a “prisoner” because of his own wrong-doing. Jesus not only gave us legal right to be free from Satan, but also opened the way for us to be forgiven individually and freed to come out into the “glorious liberty of the sons of God” (**Romans 8:21; Galatians 5:1**).

And recovery of sight for the blind

See Luke 4:18

During His ministry on earth, Jesus opened many blind eyes. But there was a far more serious blindness that he had come to deal with. Spiritual blindness had struck all mankind. Because of sin, man had no understanding of God and of spiritual things. As **1 Corinthians 2:14** states:

“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Jesus’ mission was to open the eyes of people so that they could know God!

To proclaim...the Lord’s favor

See Isaiah 61:2; Luke 4:19

Jesus came with a special message from His Father. And that message was this: *Now* is the time God is giving everyone an opportunity to be forgiven. *Now* is the time when God’s grace will be poured out on mankind. In **2 Corinthians 6:2**, we find this promise:

“For he says, ‘In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ I tell you, *now* is the time of God’s favor, *now* is the day of salvation.”

The Gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ – the Anointed One who came to save. He took us from a place of sin and separation from God, and brought us into fellowship with his heavenly Father. This restored relationship made it possible for “God’s Son” to become “our Lord.”

The Need for a Mediator

Romans 1:3-4 contains the greatest declaration of the Gospel: Jesus Christ was both human and divine! He is God, and he is man. On this premise hangs the whole Gospel. And why is this premise so important? Why was it necessary for Jesus to be both God and man?

Because of the tremendous gulf between man and God, caused by sin, it was hopeless for man himself to try to gain knowledge and understanding of God (though throughout all generations men have tried). This would be like a man born blind trying to describe a sunset – everything would be from his limited imagination, without any basis in reality.

Job was once asked, “Who by searching can find out God?” (**Job 11:7**). The answer? No one! For what man finds in his search for God is not really God, but his own limited and distorted concepts of him. The myriads of religions and philosophies in the world are proof of this.

Neither was it any good for men to try helping other men out of their sin, for each one was in the same situation. This would have been like the old adage, “the blind leading the blind” (**Matthew 15:14**), or like a man, who can't swim, jumping into the water to save another drowning man.

For God's plan of salvation to work, he needed a mediator – one who could fully identify with, and represent, both God and man. Yet all men were in sin. There was no man who could take on divine nature and become the mediator. And so, instead, it had to work the other way around. God's own Son took on human form and became the God-Man.

Throughout the Gospel accounts, Jesus Christ is continually referred to as the “Son of Man” and the “Son of God” (**Matthew 8:20,29**). As the God-Man, Jesus became the perfect mediator. As Paul tells us in **1 Timothy 2:5**:

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Son of God – Representing God to Man

As God, Jesus came down, in love, to reveal to man what God was like. In **John 1:1-4**, the Bible describes the original state of the Lord Jesus in this way:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”

Yet this same God, through whom all things were made, deigned to come to earth to reveal the nature of God to man. This revelation of God is described by John as “the light of men,” although within themselves, John says, they could not comprehend it, because even though “[t]he light shines in the darkness...the darkness has not understood it.”

This same Jesus – who was eternally co-existent with the Father – penetrated the darkness of mankind's desperate condition. **John 1:18** goes on to tell us:

“No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.”

There was no other way that God could be revealed to a humanity so far removed from him in nature and character. Even an inspired Book was not sufficient in itself. The Bible, written by the hand of men, but inspired by God himself (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**), could not fully reveal God on its own – not because of any failing in

itself, but because of man's imperfection. For without Christ we could only interpret the Scripture's revelation by our own experience. The characteristics of God that the Bible expresses, such as "love," "holiness," "righteousness," would be interpreted by our own individual highest concepts of these, which of course fall far short of the true expression. No, it was essential that the "Word" become "flesh." As **John 1:14** describes:

"The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

In his writing in **1 John 1:1-2**, John's sense of wonder and awe is revealed so vividly.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father has appeared to us."

The Word which John and Paul proclaimed was a "Word of life." They had seen what the Scriptures proclaim operating in the life of Jesus Christ. He is our divine "illustration" of the written Word. In him we understand the revelation of God which is given to us in his Word. We see Jesus and then we know what God is like. We see this incredible truth expressed in **2 Corinthians 4:6**:

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Son of Man – Representing man to God

Jesus Christ stood before God as man. He represented the human race. As man he identified with us in every aspect of life.

- **He felt hungry** – "After fasting forty days and forty nights he was hungry" (**Matthew 4:2**; see also **Matthew 21:18**).
- **He felt weary** – "Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired from the journey, sat down by the well" (**John 4:6**; see also **Mark 4:38**).
- **He felt loney** – "He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them...Stay here and keep watch with me...Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Could you men not watch with me for one hour?'..." (**Matthew 26:7-40**).
- **He felt grief** – "Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death...'" (**Matthew 26:8**; see also **John 11:5**; **Luke 19:41**).

- ☞ **He felt pain** – “They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again” (**Matthew 27:30**; see also **Mark 15:15**).
- ☞ **He was rejected** – “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him” (**John 1:11**).
- ☞ **He was mocked** – “They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then wove a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right and knelt in front of him and mocked him. ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ they said” (**Matthew 27:29-30**; see also **Mark 15:29-32**; **Luke 22:63**; **23:11-36**).
- ☞ **He was slandered** – “Many of them said, ‘He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?’” (**John 10:20**; see also **Mark 14:56-57**).
- ☞ **He was tempted**– “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin” (**Hebrews 4:15**; see also **Luke 4:1-13**).

Though Jesus had no sin of his own, as man he bore our sin, and God judged him as the representative of mankind. Thus he set us free and bridged the gulf between us and God.

His Humanity

Let’s take another look at **Romans 1:3**, this time from the *King James Version*:

“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.”

The Gospel is an account of incarnation. It tells of a Jesus who was very much a man. He had been born as a baby, had grown to maturity, and had identified with us in every aspect of life. Paul preached of someone who was not a legendary figure in an imaginary story, nor someone who was so far removed from us that he couldn’t feel with us in our problems. No, the central figure of the Gospel is one who was really and truly one with the men he had come to save.

His human nature

Read Philippians 2:5-11

As we saw in the previous lesson, Jesus became totally identified with us in our humanity. **Isaiah 53:2-3** describes him this way:

“He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not...”

Read Isaiah chapter 53

Take a look at how the humanity of Jesus was expressed:

- ☞ He came as a baby in all its vulnerability (**Luke 2:5-7**)
- ☞ He submitted to parental guidance (**Luke 2:51**)
- ☞ He grew in knowledge, wisdom and stature (**Luke 2:46-47,52**)
- ☞ He worked as a carpenter (**Mark 6:3**)
- ☞ He was anointed for ministry (**Luke 3:21-2;4:1,16-21**)
- ☞ In the limitations of his humanity, he was totally dependent upon his heavenly Father (**John 5:19, 30; 14:28**)

Descendant of David

Read Luke 3:23,31

It is no coincidence that Paul pinpoints David out of all the human ancestors of Jesus. Scripture had prophesied it (**Isaiah 9:6-7**), and Israel knew that the Messiah would be the “Son of David” (**Matthew 22:41-42;21:9**). When blind Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus for help, calling him the “Son of David,” he was declaring his faith. He was saying in essence, “I believe you are the Messiah we have been waiting for!” (**Mark 10:46-52**). The prophecies concerning the Son of David also spoke of his eternal throne (**Psalms 89:19-37; Isaiah 9:7; 16:5; Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 1:32-33**).

His Divinity

Romans 1:4 tells us, in the *King James Version*:

“And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

The Gospel is an account of resurrection. If Jesus had lived a good life and died an heroic death, and that was all, he would then have simply been numbered in history as one of many such great and heroic figures. The fact that he was unique, however, is demonstrated by the Resurrection. The others are dead and gone, and have left only a memory. Jesus lives on and his presence is still powerful today. It was the resurrected Lord who told His disciples, “you will be my witnesses” (**Acts 1:8**). And from that moment on, everywhere they went they testified of his resurrection – not just in word, but in demonstration (**1 Thessalonians 1:5**). **Acts 4:33** tells us:

“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.”

Read Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:30-32

This is the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church – to testify to the world that Jesus Christ is God’s Son and is alive today.

Throughout his ministry on earth, Jesus revealed the character and heart of God to mankind. He demonstrated his power and his love. He imparted his grace and

truth (**John 1:14**). But the Resurrection was the final great declaration and demonstration to the world that Jesus is in reality the Son of God! The resurrection did not make Jesus Christ God's Son – he was this before his birth on earth (**John 1:1-4**). The Resurrection was the mighty vindication of who he already was.

The Agents of the Resurrection

All three Persons of the Godhead were involved in the resurrection of Jesus:

The Father

“I pray also...that you may know...his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead...” (**Ephesians 1:18-20**; see also **1 Corinthians 6:14**; **Acts 4:10**; **Hebrews 13:20**).

The Holy Spirit

“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you” (**Romans 8:11**; see also **1 Peter 3:18**).

The Son

“Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days’...the temple he had spoken of was his body” (**John 2:19**; see also **John 10:18**).

You see, two aspects were involved in Jesus' Resurrection:

- **An outward power** – the Father and the Holy Spirit were both at work in the resurrection.
- **His own inward holiness** – it was through the “spirit of holiness” (**Romans 1:4**) that Jesus was raised from the dead. Death was the judgment for sin (**Genesis 2:17**; **Romans 3:23**). It was impossible for the sinless Son of God to die until he took our sin upon himself (note **John 10:31-39**). Then, when the work was completed and he had taken the full judgment for our sin, death no longer had any right to him.

The Lord Jesus' spirit of holiness – his own holy nature – could not be touched by death, and the moment his work of identification with us was complete, he burst through the bands of death with the greatest demonstration of God's power the world has ever seen.

No wonder Paul was to declare, in his introduction to his letter to the Roman Christians:

“God...who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In the words of the *New Living Translation*:

“It is the Good News about his Son, Jesus, who came as a man, born into King David’s royal family line. And Jesus Christ our Lord was shown to be the Son of God when God powerfully raised him from the dead by means of the Holy Spirit.”

And as J. B. Phillips’ *The New Testament in Modern English* expresses it:

“The gospel centered in God’s Son, a descendant of David by human genealogy and patently marked out as the Son of God by the power of that Spirit of holiness which raised him to life again from the dead. He is our Lord, Jesus Christ...”