

2) Paul's understanding of Jesus Christ as the son of David was crucial to his gospel; the gospel that had been "*promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures.*" More than any other king, David epitomized the Israelite theocracy: he was the king uniquely chosen by God and attested by Him to be the man after His own heart, and it was through David that the Lord had fulfilled His promises to Abraham. For it was David who brought the Old Covenant theocracy to its pinnacle of glory, power, prosperity, security, and extension.

- David established Israel's promised dominion from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea to the river of Egypt, and the glory of his amazing accomplishments were manifested in the reign of his son Solomon (cf. Genesis 15:18-21 and 1 Kings 4:21).
- The Scripture also associates David's reign and its extension in Solomon with the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham of a seed as numerous as the sand of the seashore, the dust of the earth, and the stars of the heavens (cf. Genesis 13:16 with 2 Chronicles 1:9; also Genesis 22:15-17 with 1 Kings 4:20 and 1 Chronicles 27:23).
- God had further promised Abraham that He would make him a great nation, and Israel came to its height of national greatness under David. In David the God of Israel had established His people above the nations of the earth; those who blessed Israel were blessed, and those who cursed them were cursed.

And as His great lord ruling over His kingdom, God had promised David that He would establish his house, throne, and kingdom forever. In particular, God pledged Himself to raise up one of David's offspring to be the one in whom those promises were to be realized. It was in God's revelation of David's greater son that Jesus' regal role in recovering the fallen kingdom of the old aeon and moving it into the new aeon that is the new creation was most clearly disclosed.

The theocratic kingdom promised to Abraham had been realized in David, but its glory was short-lived. Solomon executed his reign in the prosperity, power, and dominion established by his father, and God sustained the kingdom of Israel during his rule in order to fulfill His promise to David (1 Kings 11:1-12). But the marks of decline were already present with Solomon's reign, and following his death the kingdom was fractured and both Israel and Judah began their steady decline into judgment and ultimate destruction in the captivities. David had brought both houses of Israel together (2 Samuel 2:1-5:5), but his own sin incurred the judgment of division and strife that ultimately led to the severing of Israel from Judah (2 Samuel 12:1-12).

The Israelite theocracy was destined to fail, for by divine design it merely represented the kingdom of God in *typological form*. It served the purpose of furthering the revelation of the true kingdom and preparing for its coming. And so, *as they spoke in the context of the decline of David's kingdom*, the prophets promised not only its final destruction in the captivities, but also a kingdom to be raised up beyond it: a kingdom whose coming represented the fulfillment of God's covenant with David; a kingdom to be established and ruled by David's promised Son; a kingdom of an entirely different order, not of this present world (note again Isaiah 9:6-7, 11:1-16; Jeremiah 23:5-6, 30:1-22, 33:1-26; Ezekiel 34:23-24, 37:24-25; Hosea 2:1-3:5; Amos 9:11-15; Zechariah 12:7-8).

As great as David was, he was a man and king subject to the present, cursed order. By divine declaration, David was a man after God's heart, yet his inherent sinfulness insured that he was unfit to rule over the kingdom that was the ultimate object of promise. Though greatness marked David's rule, so did sin and failure. His transgression as king brought the fracturing of his own household, and the enmity and strife that began there reached their fruition in the division of his kingdom during the reign of his grandson, Rehoboam. David's kingdom was not the promised kingdom, and David was not its king. For the fundamental characteristics of this kingdom would be *perfection* and *permanence* in the attainment of the ideals only portrayed and longed for in the Davidic theocracy.

- This latter kingdom was to be marked by everlasting reconciliation between the houses of Israel, even as their estrangement was a primary characteristic of the former kingdom in its decline and ultimate destruction. Even more, the promised kingdom was not to merely raise up David's fallen tabernacle and bring reconciliation within the houses of Israel, *it would embrace all the Gentile nations of the earth*. The kingdom of David's son was to be comprehensive and inclusive, extending to the entire earth and all its peoples (cf. Psalm 89:19-25; Isaiah 11:10-12, 19:18-25, 25:1-9, 45:18-25, 49:1-7, 51:1-8; Amos 9:11-15; etc.).
- As well, it would involve the permanent restoration of all righteousness, peace, and blessing. *The promised kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom in substance rather than form*. Whereas the former kingdom had existed in the context of sin's curse, the latter kingdom would be established upon the removal of the curse and the inauguration of an entirely new order - a *new creation* (Isaiah 2:1-4, 9:6-7, 11:1-16, 35:1-10, 55:1-13, 59:1-60:22, 65:1-66:24). The prophets spoke of the *eschatological kingdom of God* that the Davidic kingdom only typified and anticipated. From the point of God's disclosure in the Davidic Covenant, the great hope of Israel was the kingdom to be gained and ruled by David's greater son.

And when it is remembered that this transition from the old order to the new was founded upon the *resurrection*, the significance of Paul's second point of introduction becomes profoundly evident: "*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.*"

The kingdom of God that is the new order was represented typologically by the Israelite kingdom. *And that latter kingdom, initiated with the constitution of the nation of Israel at Sinai, was preeminently a **covenant kingdom** defined by the principle and obligation of **righteousness**.*

- Because righteousness is biblically defined as absolute conformity to the divine nature, it necessarily stands as the governing principle in every covenant between God and man. If human beings are to have communion with God they must be as He is.
- For this reason Israel's status as a covenant kingdom was also founded upon the principle of righteousness. The Mosaic Covenant given to Israel immediately upon her deliverance from Egypt set forth that righteousness with exhaustive definition, thereby providing the criteria upon which the theocracy was to be established and perpetuated.

In the same way the antitypical kingdom of David's singular son - if indeed it were to be *God's* kingdom - must be founded upon righteousness. But because this kingdom was to be defined by the reversal of the curse and the permanent and comprehensive establishment of all righteousness, *it presupposed the full, everlasting satisfaction of God's justice against sin*, something that the former kingdom never realized.

For it was man's rebellion that had brought about God's judgment in the curse, and from that point forward the created order was marked by unrighteousness, calamity, unrest, and enmity. Therefore, if the cursing of the cosmos that was the judgment of God against sin were to be abolished, sin itself and its consequent guilt would first have to be abolished. This being so, the inauguration and establishment of the promised kingdom presupposed the accomplishment of two tasks:

1. the permanent, comprehensive *satisfaction* of the *guilt* of sin
2. the *vanquishing* of the power and presence of sin

These tasks were foundational to the transition from the *old aeon* - typified in the prophets by the Israelite, Davidic theocracy - to the *new aeon* of the true theocracy ruled over by David's promised Son; the kingdom of God marked by unqualified perfection and everlasting righteousness.

But given the *universal* corruption and sinfulness that define the old aeon, it was impossible that these two obligations could be met apart from *vicarious atonement* and the *imputation of righteousness*.

- That is to say, divine righteousness demands that the guilt of sin be satisfied by the death of the offender (cf. Leviticus 22:1-9; Numbers 18:20-32; Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 3:16-20, 18:1-4; Hebrews 9:22; etc.), so that either the sinner must die for his own sins or someone else free of the guilt of sin must die in his place. The implication of this is evident: *if a sinful man under the condemnation of death is to enter the new aeon of the kingdom of God, another must satisfy the demands of his guilt.*

- Yet the satisfaction of guilt is not sufficient in itself; the sinful and defiled man must be made fit to inhabit the kingdom, a kingdom defined by all righteousness and, therefore, the absence of every imperfection. *The inhabitant of the new aeon must be recovered in his essential nature*; he must have the divine image in which he was created fully restored. This leaves only three alternatives:
 1. The kingdom of David's Son will exclude all men because of their sinfulness and impurity and their inability to rectify their own condition.
 2. The kingdom awaits the renewal of all things at which time men will be made fit in their persons to inhabit it.
 3. Men enter this kingdom in the present age *in the context of their personal sin and defilement* by virtue of the imputed and mediated perfection of another.

Given that the heart of the gospel is that the kingdom of God has indeed come and all men are called to enter it (Matthew 3:1-3, 4:12-17, 10:1-8, 12:9-28, 13:24-52; Mark 1:14-15; cf. also Acts 1:1-8, 8:9-12, 19:8-9, 28:16-23; Romans 14:1-18; 1 Corinthians 4:16-20; Colossians 1:13-14), it is evident that the final alternative is the correct one.

Thus the kingdom of David's son promised to David and reiterated by the prophets is a kingdom marked by vicarious atonement and imputation.

Neither is this simply a logical deduction; it is the testimony of the prophets themselves (Isaiah 49:1-13, 59:1-60:3; Jeremiah 30:1-33:26, esp. 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:16-37:28; etc.). And because the kingdom of God stands upon these two foundational pillars of vicarious atonement and imputation, it is necessarily associated with one who is at the same time **man** and yet **greater than man**.