

Romans 1:1-7

Introduction

Why would a former Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee of Pharisees, and one who meticulously obeyed the law, identify himself as the servant of a crucified criminal? Paul provides the answer in his opening address in his epistle to the Romans.

Summary

In Romans 1:1-7, Paul shows that the man the leaders of Israel and Roman authorities once crucified is the King of kings and that Paul is His royal servant who has been commissioned to bring about the obedience of the nations.

1. Inaugurated King vv. 1-4

As was customary in the first century, the apostle Paul begins his letter by identifying himself as the author. Much more important, however, is the person that Paul serves; Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus (**vs. 1 a.**). The title, Christ, is the Greek term for the Hebrew term, Messiah. The Messiah was the One who would restore God's rule and authority to a fallen and rebellious creation (**Psalm 2; 110; Isa 61:1**).

Paul identifies Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed of God.

He states that Jesus and His gospel were "promised beforehand through [God's] prophets in the Holy Scriptures" (**Rom. 1:2-3a; cf. John 5:46; Luke 24:27**).

Paul not only appeals to the OT Scriptures to substantiate his assertion that Jesus is the Christ, he also appeals to Christ's lineage and His resurrection from the dead (**Rom. 1:3b-4**). The resurrection from the dead was Jesus's inauguration as the King of kings (**Phil 2:8-9; Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33**)

As Paul sets out the identity of Jesus, the inaugurated King of kings, he also has in mind here the two great time periods of redemptive history.

This is seen in his use of a contrast between the flesh and the Spirit.

Christ has come in the flesh and has inaugurated the age of the Spirit, the new creation, the new heavens and earth and with the new creation, God the Father has also inaugurated the reign of His Son, Jesus.

2. Royal Servant vv. 1, 5a

The long-awaited Messiah has come, and now the nations must submit to his reign (**Psalm 2:11-12**). Paul adds the title 'Lord' to Jesus in Romans 1:3, an Old Testament title that belongs exclusively to Yahweh. What else is a person to do but bend the knee and serve this great King? This is why Paul identifies himself as the "servant" of Jesus Christ (**Rom 1:1**).

Paul is the royal servant (ambassador) chosen by the King to herald the gospel (**Rom. 1:4-5**). He did not take the office of apostle to himself.

Christ Himself sought Paul, called him from the womb, set him apart as a prophet to the nations and personally confronted Paul on the road to Damascus.

3. The Obedience of Faith vv. 5b-7

God chose Paul to herald the inaugurated reign of the Messiah; to call the nations away from their vain plotting against the Lord and His Anointed (**Rom. 1:5b**).

Paul wrote to the church at Rome to continue his apostolic mission because they belonged to Jesus Christ (**Rom. 1:6-7a**). They had the longing of every faithful Israelite resting on them: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (**Rom. 1:7b; cf, Num. 6:24-26**).

They were no longer among those who set themselves against the Lord and His Anointed but were now among those who took refuge in the Messiah.

Paul wrote to these Roman Christians both to remind them of the tremendous blessings they had received and to give them a greater understanding of the faith they professed so that they might continue to yield the obedience of faith.

4. Relevant Message

Paul's message stretches back to the first century and beyond to the prophecies of the coming Messiah, yet it is still just as relevant today.

We no longer live in the shadow lands of the Old Testament in which we behold Christ in types, sacrifices, the priesthood, or in promises yet to be fulfilled. We no longer wait with eager anticipation with the Old Testament saints for the dawning of the last days, the inauguration of the new creation, and the advent of the Messiah, King Jesus. "We live in the wake of the advent of Christ."

Yet we still face many of the prejudices and outright rebellion that Christ and Paul faced in their own day. We must pray that God in Christ would grant the ability to look beyond what the world sees and behold by faith the crucified and risen Messiah—the son of David and the Son of God.

We should praise God our heavenly Father in the knowledge that His Anointed sits on the throne and rules in the midst of His enemies.

Seek the forgiveness of your sins, kiss the Son, and put your trust in Him, the royal emissary of God's peace and love.