

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

The Good News of the Resurrection

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Romans 1:1-7

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I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to Romans 1. We are stepping aside from our exposition of John for a week. We plan to pick up there next week in Verse 18 of Chapter 15, 15:18 of John.

But today, Romans 1:1-7. I chose this passage because I wanted to talk about the implications of the resurrection, the great benefits that are ours because of our central affirmation of our faith that Christ is risen, and what that means for us. Paul makes clear in another place, not in this passage this morning, but he says in 1 Corinthians that if Christ is not raised, our faith is in vain. We of all men, most miserable because the resurrection truly is the lynchpin of the Gospel. You take it out, you have nothing of value, nothing that functions. If Christ is not risen, then we need to close up the doors and forget it. But we come this morning because we know that He is risen. We come rejoicing that we have an authoritative message to give to a world that desperately needs to hear it.

I chose this passage, Romans 1:1-7, because it unpacks for us in a really neat way, a couple of the dramatic implications of the resurrection. I just want to tell you up front what you're going to see as we follow the outline. The outline is going to be a little different, the resurrection is not in my title. There are two points to the outline, okay? The first point is *The Evidence for the Gospel*, and the second is *The Essence of the Gospel*. And what I want to tell you is that as we look at *The Evidence for the Gospel*, Paul is going to recount three different things, but the chief evidence that he is going to build his case upon is the resurrection. And then he is going to talk about *The Essence of the Gospel*, and he is going to define it in essentially two points, and the culminating point is again, if you want to know what the good news is... You know, we use that word a lot, don't we? The Gospel, the Gospel, we say it all the time, and often we say things so much that we forget even what they mean. You probably heard the Gospel is defined as 'good news'. The Greek word literally means 'good message'. It doesn't just mean a happy thought, it means an authoritative message. The 'euangelion', 'eu' means 'good', 'angelion' is 'the message proclaimed that is delivered by an angelos, a messenger, but he carries with him the authority of the one who sent the message'.

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So good news, if you want to define it, you could say the Gospel is God's authoritative declaration of His compassion for sinners, and His willingness to save. Not only His willingness, His ability. So God's authoritative declaration of His compassion for sinners and His willingness and ability to save. So He cares about you, that's what we say when we tell people, that is our message, "You are like me," talking to an unbeliever, "You are where I was before Christ found me. You are, whether you realize it or not fully, because sinful men pretend that things are okay. We ignore the problem. We try to drink the burdens away, or distract ourselves from the ache in our souls with anything—with pleasure, with food, with companionship, but the reality is that something is fundamentally wrong with us. We need a Savior, and the authoritative declaration of the Gospel is God cares about you, and He is able, He can save. He has offered salvation to you and that is the announcement, it is an announcement, a declaration of God's compassion and His willingness, and ability to save sinners."

So when we get to *The Essence of the Gospel*, back to my outline, *The Evidence for the Gospel*, we're going to talk about that because that's what Paul does. Then we're going to have *The Essence of the Gospel*. and we're going to see the second point that I just gave you of what the Gospel is. It is not just that God cares, that's the first part of it. The second part is He is able, He is mighty to save, and what Paul is going to tell you is that what makes that point clear, because it is one thing to have somebody that cares about you, and loves you in your misery. That is a great benefit and we're going to see that is part of the Gospel. But how much more wonderful is it that not only we have a God who cares about us, and who came down to experience with us our suffering, we have a God who is mighty to save? His arm is not too short, and the resurrection is the definitive, unmistakable, irrefutable proof of that fact. Mighty to save, Jesus Christ.

So the outline, *The Evidence for the Gospel*, *The Essence of the Gospel*, and look as we go through it at the centrality of the resurrection. That's why we've chosen this passage. So we're going to try to unpack the passage in its fullness now.

Romans 1:1-7 ~ Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 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, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of

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faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 7 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.

Let's pray together.

Father, we ask that as we come to Your word this morning that You, by Your power, and Your might, and the work of Your Spirit, might make known to us the glory of the salvation that You have announced in the glorious person of Your Son. May Christ be exalted. We pray in His name, Amen.

I love the apostle Paul. Now he writes a letter here to the Romans and as he does, in honoring the 1st Century convention, the way that you wrote a letter back then is you started off with a salutation. A salutation included who it was that was writing along with maybe a detail or two, a title or whatever, and the next part of the salutation was 'To:'. We start it off differently, we write our letter, we say, "Dear Bill," or "Dear John," or "Dear Tom," or whatever, right? Then we end up with, "Sincerely yours." Well back then they started off with who it is from, and then they get to who it is to, and if you look at this carefully, these are the kinds of things you want to notice when you are reading the Bible. Paul says, ***Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus,...*** Now he could stop right there, that has already given a great introduction to who he is, and you could expect him to go on down to Verse 7. You would expect really that one, that everything between ***Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus,...*** and Verse 7, ***to all who are beloved of God in Rome,...*** that is a mighty huge parenthesis. I mean, he starts out to say, ***Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus,...*** to ***to all who are beloved of God in Rome,...*** But he can't contain himself, what comes out in between is the glory of the Gospel, which is why he is writing them in the first place. He is writing them to give them the full presentation of his Gospel, and Romans is essentially that. It is the full delivery of the full package, God's plan of salvation.

I distilled it down into a sentence and a half or so a moment ago, but Romans 1-16 *is* the Gospel in its fullness. But here, rather than wait to get to it in Verse 8, he has to pack it into his salutation because his heart so beats with the joy, and the wonder of this message. That he says, ***... called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,*** He could have stopped there and jumped on down to Verse 7, but once he said ***...gospel of God...*** he's got to start talking about it, and then he begins to do that, ***which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son,...*** and then he begins to tell us about His Son.

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Now what we want to do is spend our time this morning looking at the Gospel that Paul was so thrilled about, and that you, if you belong to Jesus Christ, at one time were so thrilled about, and which we need to continually grow in our appreciation of, and delight in this morning. The Gospel, that is our subject. God's authoritative declaration. But what Paul does, as he begins this, is he first of all points to the evidence for the Gospel. So the two points, back to the two points that I promised earlier, *The Evidence for the Gospel* is our first point.

1) The Evidence for the Gospel:

What he does after Verse 1 is he then goes to evidence, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. He realizes that the Roman Christians are tempted to believe the lies of the Jews around them who have rejected Christ. They are tempted to believe the lies of the Gentiles, the Pagans around them who are rejecting Christ, and he says, "I want you to understand that the Gospel of God rests upon solid proof, irrefutable proof," and he gives three basic proofs. *The Evidence for the Gospel*, the first major point, there are three sub-points. The first is, Verse 3, which he promised beforehand. One of the great, powerful evidences for the New Testament is how the New Testament is prophesied so completely, and so thoroughly in the Old. The Old Testament points to the New, and when you put the New Testament, and you read the New Testament in light of the Old, you say, "Isn't it amazing?" Folks have tried to count up the number of prophecies that are fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ, it numbers over 300. There are over 300 Old Testament prophecies that are fulfilled perfectly in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.

There was a math professor out on the west coast back in the 50's who did a mathematical analysis, and he said that the likelihood of eight prophecies being fulfilled in any one man's life, eight of the Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled in any one man's life, mathematically are one in ten to the 17th power. That is a hundred thousand trillion. That is one with 17 zeroes beside it. That is the likelihood of eight prophecies being fulfilled, but there are over 300. We could spend hours just talking about all the prophecies. I'll just hit a few of them.

Think about the fact that Jesus was born, the Son of God was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem, and another one, but He was going to be called a Nazarene. He would be called a Nazarene born in Bethlehem. Well how is He called a Nazarene? Well His family lived in Nazareth, but remember when it came time for Mary, the virgin, to give birth, a few weeks before they got the word that they had to go to Bethlehem for a census, because God calls the Roman emperor to call a census at

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the right time to get His Son from Nazareth to Bethlehem. So He is born in Bethlehem right on schedule, including bending the emperor to do His will, God bends this emperor to do His will, but He is still called a Nazarene because that is going to be home. Shortly after He is born, they are still in Bethlehem, Herod fulfills Old Testament prophecy by wanting to kill all the children in Bethlehem, and Joseph is warned in a dream in the night to flee, and they flee down into Egypt.

The first prophecy from Jeremiah is fulfilled that there would be great weeping when the Son of God comes, when the Messiah arrives, there would be great weeping. Rachel would be weeping and that's because Herod sends his soldiers to murder every male child under two years old in Bethlehem because of the word he hears from the magi. But Joseph being warned in a dream by night, takes the child into Egypt, and then when he learns that Herod has died, he comes out of Egypt and goes back to Nazareth, and that fulfills Hosea 11:1, *...out of Egypt I called My son*. And on, and on, and on like that.

Look at all the prophecies about the crucifixion, we read one earlier from Isaiah 53, He was pierced for our transgressions, written 700 years before Christ. Zechariah writes around 530 years before Christ of the same thing. Psalm 22 pictures death by crucifixion, written 1,000 years before Christ. Verse 16, *They pierced my hands and my feet*. Verse 18, "For My clothes they cast lots and divided them among themselves." All of these different prophecies are testimony to the fact that God's Son is truly Jesus Christ, that He is the Savior of the world. Three hundred fulfilled prophecies.

One of my favorites is the prophecy in Daniel 9:24. We preached on Daniel a few years back, and when we looked at that, there is a verse in Daniel 9, Verse 24, says this, that after seven weeks, and 62 weeks, Messiah, the Prince, will come. Seven weeks and 62 weeks, that's 69 weeks, 69×7 is 483, 483 years after decree to rebuild Jerusalem, Messiah, the Prince, will come. When we looked at that we saw that we believe that the decree that he is talking about was given in 458 by Artaxerxes to Ezra, to go back and rebuild Jerusalem, and to replenish the temple. When you look, when you go 483 years into the future, when you account for there is no zero between 1 B.C. and 1 A.D., work it out on paper, you'll see this. Then 26 A.D. was the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry. Four hundred and eighty-three years after that decree, the message goes out through Jerusalem, God says, "It is time now, John." John goes out in the wilderness and says, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Messiah, the Prince, is coming. He is behind me." Prophecy after prophecy, we could go on all day.

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So he says, which he promised beforehand, that's the first evidence for the Gospel. Then he says, in Verse 3, He's *...a descendant of David according to the flesh...* He's proving again that Jesus is the good news, He is the essence of the good news, born of a descendant of David. 2 Samuel 7:14 prophesied that He would be a descendant of David. In fact, the whole Old Testament makes clear that the Messiah will come from the line of David. When you look back, actually, in the flow of the Old Testament, we are told in the very beginning, Genesis 3, right after the fall, when God talks to Adam and Eve after they've sinned, and in talking to the woman, in talking to the serpent, He says, "There will be enmity between your seed and the woman's seed." He talks to the serpent, "And you will bruise his heel, and he will bruise your head."

That was the first prophecy of the Gospel, that is actually called the *'proto euangelion'* by theologians, the first preaching of the Gospel there in Genesis 3. What it is saying is that there would come a seed of the woman, that is there is going to be a man that is going to come and deliver mankind from the curse of sin and death. Now what is extraordinary about that, we don't realize, and I'm sure they didn't realize it at the time, but they must, all of the diligent readers of the Old Testament must have thought about this when they read it. "Wait a minute, the word for 'seed', Hebrew word, *'ze-ra'*, translated into Greek later, *'spermatos'* from which we get our English word *'sperm'*, the seed, the sperm comes from a man.

How can it be the seed of the woman? The seed doesn't come from the woman, but we were told at the very beginning of the Bible that there would be enmity between the woman's seed, and the serpent's seed, and the serpent's seed would bite the heel of the woman's seed, and the woman's seed would crush the head of the serpent's seed. What is going on? That is prophesying the one birth in history that happened without a male seed, Jesus Christ. Born of a virgin, the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and placed in her womb the seed, the Son of God. So fulfilled prophecy makes this clear, well we're told that, He'll be a seed of the woman, and then as we go on along, we find out that that person is going to come from the line of Abraham. It narrows it down, there is kind of this funneling happening in the Old Testament. It's going to be a human being, it's going to be a human being born supernaturally, but then He is going to be from the line of Abraham.

Remember Abraham has two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. It is going to be from Isaac, so we're narrowing down further. Isaac has two sons, Jacob and Esau. It's going to be through the line of Jacob. Jacob has 12 sons. It's going to be through the line of Judah, Genesis 49:10. Judah has many children. We find out in 2 Samuel 7:14 that

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David is the one of the descendants of Judah that the Messiah will come through. That's why in Matthew 1, the first verses of the New Testament, is the genealogy, the genealogy of Jesus Christ. And what you see in Matthew is he starts out with Abraham, and he says, "Abraham," and he goes all the way down to David, and all the way down to Christ, and he is saying, "Look, Jesus meets the qualifications. He is from Abraham. He is from David."

Luke does the same thing. Now in Matthew, Matthew gives you Joseph's line because Joseph was Jesus' legal father. Legally, he was the father of this son, and so God took care to make sure that His legal father was from the line of David. In Luke 3, you have Mary's line. He doesn't start off saying Mary, he talks about her father, and it gives you a different father for Joseph than you have in Matthew, and the reason is because he has given Joseph's father-in-law. He goes back from Mary all the way back to David, all the way back to Abraham, all the way back to Adam. He is saying, "This man is qualified as the Messiah." He proves it by the fulfilled prophecies, by the descent from David, but then his greatest proof he saves for Verse 4, ... ***who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead...*** The ultimate proof that Jesus Christ is able to save, the ultimate proof that He is the one that all of Scripture has been pointing to, is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Declared, Verse 4.

It is a hard word to translate into English in this context. Most of the translations have used the word '*declared*', but in the Greek the word really does not mean '*declared*'. Like I said, it is hard to translate because there is so much context with it, but the idea of the word normally means '*to set a boundary, to mark out, to determine*'. It means to '*establish a demarcation or division*'. The Greek word is the Greek verb '*horizo*'. We get our English word '*horizon*' from that. Now what is the horizon? The horizon is the boundary between the sky and the earth. It is the fixed boundary, as you look off into any direction, you are able to see the horizon. Especially on the ocean where there are no trees around, you see the fixed point. You see sky and you see water. The horizon is that fixed boundary. '*Horizo*' is the word that means that, and it means '*to mark out, to set a boundary, to separate, to make a distinction*', and so the idea is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is that which set Him apart, which makes Him distinct from every other. It is a fixed appointment, the boundary line. This is what separates Jesus from all others who would claim to be messiahs.

There is something about men that we know that we need a Savior. Unbelievers know they need a savior even though they don't know they need a savior. Think about that for a minute. People think that they are fine, you know the message that

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the world says is, “I’m okay, you’re okay,” right? “I’m okay, you’re okay.” Kind of the Oprah Winfrey theology, but people in their hearts know they need a savior. This is why you see phenomena like this. When President Obama was elected, and this happens with other presidents, not just him, but I think it kind of reached a high point with him. There was this messianic expectation, wasn’t there? That now hope and change are going to happen. Now, finally, there was a sense of salvation. I mean, people were weeping. You know what I mean? It was profound that we had elected our first black president, and that in itself was certainly moving, but there was more than that going on. There was this idea of messianic expectation that he is going to lead us on. Men look for someone to be that leader and savior. This is how Hitler came to power in Germany. How do you become that kind of force in one country as he did in Germany?

In their poverty, in their misery after the first world war, they were looking for a savior, and so they were willing to give him the title of ‘*Fuhrer*’, ‘*Leader*’, ‘*Shepherd*’, and they were willing to follow him blindly because men are looking for a savior. Political saviors abound throughout history. People looked for philosophical saviors. They think they found it when they find some writing of some philosopher. “I have now found a way to make meaning in my life.” The writings of Plato, or Aristotle, or Nietzsche, or whoever, Sartre. Psychological savior. “Freud, he is the answer.” “No, it is Hume.” “No, it’s Rogers.” But it is somebody, somebody has the answer because, “We need help. We need a savior.”

Then you have spiritual saviors who make the claim to be saviors. You know, Buddha, Confucius, Mohammad. What this verse is saying is there is only one Savior and He is set apart from every other one who claims to that office. He is set apart in a definitive, unmistakable, irrefutable way, and that is that there is only one man that has risen from the dead. You can go visit Confucius’, I guess, well I don’t know for sure if they know where it is, but if it can be found, you can go see his bones, because his bones are rotting somewhere. Buddha’s tomb you can go see. Mohammad, they make pilgrimages to Mohammad’s tomb, but Jesus Christ is risen. He is not a lesser Prophet than Mohammad. He trumps Mohammad all over the place. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And that’s what he’s saying. It’s unmistakable. What’s beautiful about this too is you think about what is it that sets Jesus apart as the Savior? We sometimes might think that just His teaching, and His teaching does, His teaching has the divine authority about it, doesn’t it? When people heard Him, the first sermon that we have recorded in the New Testament, the first extended sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, what did the

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people say after He was done? They marveled at the way He spoke with authority, not as the scribes or the Pharisees.

Even His enemies, we saw this back in John 7. Remember when the Pharisees and the Chief Priests actually send soldiers to arrest Jesus? They come back empty handed, and the leaders say, “Where is Jesus? Why didn’t you arrest Him?” This is their answer: “Never did a man speak like this man speaks. His teaching, such power.” But that’s not what Paul points to as the definitive definition that He is the Messiah, the one and only. You could say, “Look at the miracles that He worked,” and certainly His miracles are astounding. He far surpasses Moses, or Elijah, or Elisha, or every other worldly pretender. Jesus’ miracles, we have them recorded in the Gospel of John, seven great signs, but then I love how John ends his book. Remember the last verse of John, verse 21:25, after he’s unfolded a number of marvelous miracles. He’s talked about how Jesus turned water into wine. He’s talked about how Jesus healed a nobleman from Capernaum. Though Jesus was miles away, He said, “Go your way. Your son lives.” He healed him from a distance. Then He fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. He fed 5,000 men, probably 20,000 people when you count women and children. They weren’t big loaves either. They were little rolls basically, five rolls and two little fish.

Anyway, He fed the 5,000. He walked on the water. He caused the man who was born blind to see. He raised a man from the dead. And then John, after he lays out all of these things, at the end of his book, he says, “There were many more things Jesus did in the presence of His disciples. If they were recorded, I don’t believe the world would contain the books.” But it’s not that ultimately that Paul points to. It’s not His miracle-working power. It’s not His power in teaching. What it is, is His power over death. Paul is saying what the author of Hebrews said in Hebrew 7:16. The way you know that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world is not by virtue of some physical requirement, but it is by the power of an indestructible life. Jesus Christ possesses an indestructible life. There’s no one else like Jesus. So the resurrection is the supreme evidence for the Gospel.

2) The Essence of the Gospel:

Then he moves to the essence of the Gospel, and there are basically two points he points to. I mentioned earlier that the Gospel really is, you could say in one sense the Gospel is this: God cares and God is able. It’s kind of like the song you all sang earlier. I was thinking as we reflected the choir’s song, “You are with me, and You are sufficient. Your sufficiency. You’re more than enough with me.” That is, He cares and He comes to where you are. He comes to you in your misery. That’s

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the first point of the Gospel. The second point is, not only does He come and care, but He's able to lift you up.

So he gets to that. That's the essence of the Gospel, and again, the resurrection is going to prove the second point. The essence of the Gospel, he says, first of all, he's *set apart for the gospel of God*, in Verse 1, and then if you realize Verse 2 is kind of a parenthesis again, he defines the Gospel in Verse 3: *concerning His Son...* The Gospel in itself, the Gospel in a word, is Jesus. Jesus is the sum total of the Gospel. There is no Gospel outside of Jesus, and whenever you're talking about Jesus, you are talking about Gospel. He is everything to the Gospel. *...concerning His Son...* But look what he then says about *...His Son...* He basically gives us two decisive events in Jesus' life which illustrate and encapsulate the Gospel. He talks about His birth and he talks about His resurrection. He said:

Romans 1:3 ~ ...who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead,...

Paul says, "Let me distill down for you the wonder of the Gospel, the two moments in time." You can think about the great message of salvation in two instances by picking them up off the timeline and looking at them. The first moment is actually not the birth. It's the conception of the Son of God, because really that verse would be better translated—when it says *...who was born...*, again, it's difficult to translate this, but the Greek word actually says, the King James is closer, it says *...who was made of a descendant of David according to the flesh,...* The word there in Greek that's translated *was born* in the NAS actually says *became*. The word means *to become, to come into being*. Now, it doesn't mean that the eternal Son of God came into being. No, because he just said *...concerning His Son, who became...* His Son existed eternally, and has always existed with Him, as we've seen in John's Gospel.

John 1:1 ~ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He's equal in power and glory. He's dwelt with the Father throughout all eternity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a communion of love, but there was a moment in time on the timeline when the second Person of the Trinity became Man, and he says that is one of the things I want to announce as the good news. We basically have the message that the God of the universe has entered into time

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and space. Now, why did He do that? Think about it. What does that really say? Well, Paul continues to unpack it.

Romans 1:3 ~ ...who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,...

I think when he uses this word *according to the flesh*, what he's trying to highlight up for us is the fact that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, when He enters into time and space, He takes upon Himself not our body, but our flesh. Now, He is our body, but he uses the word *flesh* to emphasize the weakness of humanity. What he's saying is Jesus entered fully into the weakness of our existence. This is the miracle of the incarnation. God becomes Man and enters into a full experience of human life. The apostle Paul in Philippians 2 says that the Son emptied Himself, and took upon Himself the form of a servant. Now, what does it mean to empty Himself? It doesn't mean He stops being God, but it means He stops using, for a time, the prerogatives of God. He doesn't utilize His own power, but He lives as a Man. Jesus didn't go through life and get tempted and then use His divine power like a hurdler jumping over hurdles by hitting a jet pack. You wouldn't really want to do that, but just work with me. Jesus didn't do that. He didn't use His divine power. He, in His humanity, resisted and overcame, and the way He did was by depending upon the Father.

Ian Hamilton, in a message I heard recently, talked about this, how when you really ponder this reality that God becomes Man, the fullness of our humanity, not drawing on His omniscience or His omnipotence, but living as Man, He could have but He did not during His time here—and let me give you an example of how you know this is true. Remember Jesus' first temptation after He begins His ministry. He fasts for forty days. You find this in Matthew 4. The devil comes to Him, and what does the devil say to Him? The first temptation is, "If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread." The temptation is, "Use Your power to meet Your physical need." What does Jesus say? First of all, He says, "It is written," and He quotes Scripture. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. I'm living as true Man, and Man doesn't live by bread alone. He lives by the word of God, and I'm clinging to the word of God, and I'm not going to use My power. I'm not going to step aside from the mission that I have, which is to be true Man living a life of dependence upon God."

But Ian Hamilton was talking about this. He said, "You realize that Jesus memorized Scripture because He had to." Think about that. The eternal Son of God memorized the Bible. He'd written the Bible, but in His humanity, when He

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entered into our experience, He went into the womb. What's the most vulnerable place on the face of the earth? Especially in America today, it's the womb.

He was completely dependent upon His mother to care for Him, then His mother's arms, waiting to be fed, waiting to be changed, waiting to be cared for. As a toddler, He learns to walk. This is mind blowing. He learns to talk. He didn't turn on His divine abilities and start throwing out sentences. He would have baby talked just like your child. The difference is, though, whenever—I was talking to Cary Clayborn the other day about their daughter Addie, and he said she's hit that point where she's started doing things like looking to see if you're going to stop her. "I'm about to do this. What are you doing to do about it?" Jesus never did that, but he learned to walk, He learned to talk, and He learned His Bible, because He lived as a Man. Why would He do that? That's the question. This is what makes it good news. Why would God do that?

Well, the Scripture makes it clear. I would encourage you to read Hebrews 5 and Hebrews 2 if you want to see more about this. But the basic reason is this was necessary to save us. He had to enter into our full experience, go all the way down into our misery, yet without sin, but He experienced all of the misery and the agony that this world has as a result of our sin. He experienced all of it so that He could be a Savior to lift us up. That's good news. The God of glory and the God of Heaven cares about you that much. That's the first point of the Gospel. He was born (made) a descendant of David according to the flesh. When you realize that, this is what puts some of the hymns we try to capture. *What a friend we have in Jesus. What a friend of sinners. Jesus, what a friend of sinners. Jesus, lover of my soul. Hallelujah, what a Savior. Hallelujah, what a friend.* That's the wonder of the Gospel.

But then he says, the second point, not only did He come down so that He could come to where we are, and feel our pain with us, and love us in the midst of it, but not just to be with us. He came to lift us up. That's the second point. The Gospel is seen first of all—the essence of the Gospel and the incarnation of the Son. That's Verse 3, the incarnation of the Son, which we just covered. The second point is the exaltation of God's Son. That's Verse 4.

Romans 1:4 ~ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness,...

He was declared the Son of God with power... I said earlier that *declared* is not really a good translation. The idea is *appointed*. The idea is *set apart*. Remember

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we read from Psalm 2 earlier where the psalmist is talking about the spiritual war, basically, going on between fallen men, and God, and the nations are raging. The people are in an uproar. They're trying to throw off the reign of God. They're resisting God and His anointed, and God laughs from Heaven, and He basically says, "I have installed My King upon Zion, my holy mountain. It doesn't matter what you think. My King is installed." And then He says, "You have the words of the King, saying, 'I will tell you what the Lord said to Me. He said, 'Today I have begotten You. You are going to reign. Today I have begotten you.'" The idea is not *begotten* in the sense that He became the Son of God in the sense of the eternal Son of God. What He's saying though is something decisive happened at that moment, and that's what Paul is saying. He's saying that in the resurrection, something happened that had not happened before, and it's not that Jesus became the eternal Son. No, He's always been the eternal Son of God. What he's saying is that the Man Christ Jesus for the first time moves from His lowliness and His identification with our sins, to now being lifted up to the King of kings and Lord of lords. He's saying that the resurrection is the announcement, it's the declaration, that He is King, that He is Master, that He is Lord.

Now, if you think about that, this means that He is King over all of our enemies. He's sufficient for all of our needs. Now think about how we said that the world needs a Savior. We need a Savior. Look around you and look at how the world needs a Savior. Look at the reign of evil and wickedness in the world. Isn't it astonishing to see these things that are happening in our day? There were 140-some-odd children killed in Kenya by Muslim terrorists. That was in Kenya, and north of that in Libya, not long ago those 21 men were beheaded on the beach, Christians. We feel like where is the reign of God? We see evil flourishing, don't we? And those Christians that are experiencing that, how they must feel. You think about what they're going through at the moment, when those children were brought out of that school and were asked, "Are you a Christian or are you a Muslim?" If they said they were a Christian, they were killed immediately. Can you imagine child after child then saying, "I belong to Christ," knowing it was certain death? It's amazing.

We look around us and we see immorality thriving. It's amazing to me, this religious freedom thing. I understand the issue, I heard about the pizza joint that said they weren't going to serve any homosexual weddings, and comedians have made hay out of that thinking what gay wedding would want to be catered by a pizza place? But homosexuals wanting to have their freedom to the point that they don't realize that they're impinging on another person's religious convictions to

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not want to be a part of their ungodly wedding. It's not a wedding at all. It's a travesty, but we're not saying they can't do it. We're not Lord over everyone's souls, but we can say this. You will one day meet your Maker who is Lord over you, and it's love speech to tell them that.

But anyway, the law is to say that people can choose by their religious convictions not to sell or not to serve them. We know if we were Muslims saying this, it would be fine, wouldn't it? Don't you know that? If you were Islamic and you said, "I can't do that because I'm Islamic," the media would applaud you. But if you say it's for the cause of Jesus Christ, then they mock you. We see that gravity happening, the foolishness of the world's system.

Where is the reign of Christ? The reality is that He is on the throne. Reality is not what you see. Reality is what you know, and what you know is Jesus Christ is risen, and therefore He is orchestrating sovereignly everything that is happening. Even those things which are evil, that Satan is doing, God is leading him by a ring in his nose to do only that which God ultimately wants for His glory, and the resurrection is proof of that. But it's not only what's wrong in the world, but you think about what's wrong in our own hearts and our lives. Think about our need of a Savior. Think about how hard it is to resist the pressures of the world, the world system, the thoughts that come in, the values, the desire for peer pressure, acceptance of men that affect us, slavery to sin, that we feel sometimes as Christians, though we cannot really be slaves if we're Christians. You cannot be a slave to sin, but you can feel like a slave. The reality of evil coming up in our own hearts, and the reality is we need a Savior.

Well, the message of the Gospel is that God came down in the Person of Christ to meet us in our misery and to lift us out. The proof that He cares about you is He came down and became a Man. The proof that He can lift you out is He is risen, and the more you focus on that, and the more you remember that, the more you bask in that, the more you meditate on that, the more you will walk in that. Because He has risen, He has the power. He is declared the Son of God with power. He has all the power that we need. He has defeated Satan. He made a spectacle of Satan, according to Colossians 2:14. He's defeated sin. Hebrews 4:15 says He was tempted in every way, yet without sin. He has defeated the world system. It doesn't look like it, but it is defeated. He says, "In this world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." And He has certainly defeated death. "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O grave, is your sting?" He is risen.

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So the message of the Gospel is the most relevant message that the world can hear today. Everyone knows they need a Savior. They're looking for a Savior. They're not looking for God's Savior, but we have the wondrous news that God is looking to save sinners, and we make known a message that is certain, proven. All of the evidence is on our side. Even though the world is blind, the world can't see it, but they're blind. It's like would you get upset if a blind person told you your hair was messed up? "I don't like your haircut." "Well, I don't think I really respect your opinion that much." An unbeliever doesn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Well, they're blind. You see this more and more. They believe in evolution, that evolution makes all the sense. The more that I read about that the last 30 years, the more amazed I am that people believe in materialistic evolution. And I'm amazed that people believe in theistic evolution too. But to believe in materialistic evolution, that everything came out of nothing, all this order, all this beauty, that is preposterous. It takes an ignorant, foolish, blind person to believe that. It doesn't mean that they're not intelligent, but they're ignorant. They're in the dark.

The evidence for Jesus Christ being the Lord of lords and King of kings is irrefutable and undeniable, and we as Christians need to stand firm in that, and then to realize that not only is the evidence for the Gospel so encouraging, so strengthening, but the essence of the Gospel itself, the message that we have, is the best news that anyone could ever hear, that the God of Heaven loves you, cares about you, and has come down into this sin-sick world not only to identify with you, and to sympathize with you, and to empathize with you, but to lift you up, and He's able to take you out of all the misery that you're in, little by little, by His great power, by the power of His word, to make you walk in righteousness until you one day stand with Him clean forever. That's the glory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's the message that we need to bask in and that we need to share.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

Father, we thank You for the Gospel of God, as Your word just told us. It's the good news, the declaration that You have made. We pray that You would help us be people who respond to that Gospel the way that Your word commands us to, in the obedience of faith. We pray for those that are here today that have not obeyed Your Gospel, have not submitted themselves to Your gracious offer of salvation. Lord, help them today to humble themselves, to repent, and to place all of their trust in Jesus Christ. That's what it is to obey, not to do works, but to stop working and to start trusting. Help them this morning to place all of their hope in the finished work of so glorious a Savior, to realize that His blood, that He suffered in our place and experienced Your holy wrath against sin, paid the debt in full, and

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His resurrection testifies that You accepted His offering. Help them, Lord, to repent and to believe today. Maybe today be the day of salvation. And for those of us who are Yours already, Lord, help us to walk in the newness of life by the power of that resurrection being made evident more and more in our lives. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

“The Good News of the Resurrection”

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