

Christmas Promises Confirmed

Christmas Series

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Bible Text: Romans 1:1-7
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The book of Romans, chapter 1. As I mentioned before, I want to finish our Christmas series in light of my illness this past Lord's Day and give us just a short review, and then take a look at our third point for this Christmas season.

Romans 1, beginning in verse 1.

1 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 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.

Here we have this great Gospel that has so transformed this man named Saul, a man who at one time was violently persecuting the church, was actually torturing the disciples of Jesus Christ whether they be male or female, whether they be young or old. This man on the road to Damascus actually saw the risen Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15 says that he was the last of those to see the Lord Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, in person. So anybody who says that they've seen him, you know that they did not really see him, they saw something but not the Lord himself. But this man was so transformed, he was delivered as all those who are saved, truly saved are, he was delivered from being a bond-servant or a slave of sin to being a bond-servant of the living true God, and he was called by Jesus Christ himself to be an apostle and to do that, he set himself apart for the Gospel of God.

The purpose of this Gospel, verse 5, is to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for his name's sake, and those who do obey in that obedience of faith the Holy Spirit gathers together into local New Testament assemblies in which Jesus Christ himself walks and dwells among.

In making this application to the Christmas time of the year, we looked at verse 2 which he had promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, and then we looked a couple of weeks ago, verse 3, concerning his Son, and this morning we want to look at his being declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. So we've seen, if you walk away with anything, is that Christmas is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Anything else that you put into that mix, anything that you make preeminent apart from Jesus Christ makes Christmas and the season of Christmas nonsensical, meaning it has no meaning for us, and that's exactly what has happened in our culture, right? The whole so-called holiday season is totally emptied of any meaning or any edification and people just make it whatever they want to make it, every man doing that which is right in their own eyes.

Christmas is not about Jesus Christ, Christmas is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the beautiful thing about Christmas is that God promised this time of the year through the prophets in the holy Scriptures, that is, in our Old Testament, and the connection to that Old Testament is critical. In fact, Paul would say to the Sanhedrin and he would say to Felix and to other people in what he was preaching, he would say, "Loo, I'm not declaring anything to you but what our forefathers in Israel has always had hope in, and that is the resurrection from the dead." And he would say to them explicitly, "I'm not declaring anything to you except what Moses and the prophets have already said." That's amazing, isn't it? In other words, as we brought this down, we can't separate and take the Old Testament and relegate it to somewhere in times past and the New Testament is here. Yes, the New Testament has preeminence in the new covenant, but it is not disconnected from our Old Testament Scriptures. Moses talked about the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Genesis talked about the coming of the Son of God. As we read in our Scripture reading, Isaiah spoke often of the coming Christ and the implications of that. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of verses explicitly talk about the Messiah, the Christ, let alone the allusions that are there in our Old Testament, and one of the benefits that I've had in these past 23 days or so as I've been reading through the Bible, is to see just all of these not just direct quotations but allusions just jump out and begin to become edifying and strengthening in your own soul that this really is so, what we are proclaiming to people. This is the truth of God. This isn't, you know, one religion among other religions. There is no other religion. This isn't one god among many gods. There are no other gods. This isn't one Gospel among many Gospels. There is no other Gospel. And there is no other Incarnation than the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

So Christmas was not only foretold, verse 2, promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, but Christmas is about a person, verse 3, it is concerning his Son. God authored this, he came up with this. The Scriptures are the revelation of God's authorship of Christmas, the Incarnation, the death, burial and resurrection of his Son, and as we saw a couple of weeks ago, there is no baby like this baby. As much as you celebrated the birth of your babies, if you're a mother and you've given forth the privilege of having children, it was nothing like the surroundment of this child being born into this earth. This baby that came through the virgin Mary, this baby is God in human flesh. Can you imagine the privilege of a woman to have her womb used for such a privilege? It's a

blessing and many, many Jewish ladies desired to give birth to the Messiah and it was Mary who found grace, favor, in the eyes of the Lord.

This baby that grew, and this baby that ministered, and this baby that hung on a tree, and this baby that died, and this baby that was risen again, he was in the beginning. He was not only with God, he was God. This baby that was in the womb of the virgin Mary was the Creator, is the Creator of all things. That baby was holding together all things as one. He is the firstborn of the new creation. All life is in him. There is no life outside of God. Outside of God is death. This baby is the glory of God. He is the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. And in Isaiah God himself says concerning this baby and his glory, he says, "My glory I will give to no one else other than Him." And so the glory of God rests on him. This child is the Son of God in human flesh. He is the Lord of glory. He is Immanuel, God with us. He is the Alpha. He's the Omega. He's the beginning. He's the end. He is the Amen and the Amen. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Christmas is all about him. It's all about him and the sad thing about it is, and I'm sure that you might have seen it this Christmas season, is that even professing believers make Christmas about everything else but him. You try to make it about him, they're like, you know, "What? Are you trying to make this into a church service?" I actually had someone say that to me one time. I thought, "Well, yeah, I'd love to do that." It's about Jesus, amen? And so any departure, I'm talking about the Gospel now, I'm not talking about Christmas, but any departure from the Gospel, any departure from Jesus Christ in any presentation of the Gospel, in any preaching concerning him and any counseling or any confession of our faith, if there's any departure from that you have erred from the centrality of Jesus Christ and at worse you have apostatized away from the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not to have prominence in our homes or in our life or in our churches as if he's one among other equals, he is to have the preeminence. He is one among no other equals. He is it. He's the only one in the competition. He is King of kings.

That brings us down to verse 4, that this Son was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord. In other words, what the resurrection did, and we're making application to the Christmas season, what the resurrection did was say Amen to all the promises of God, promises that came some 8 or 6 or 10,000 years ago at the fall of man. The promise just sitting there waiting to be, as it were, activating. It's living, it's pulsing, but it's waiting to bring to pass the thing which God himself has ordained, and what God did in the ordination of the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God was to prepare a body for his Son. And you'll notice we talked a little bit about this, verse 3: he was born a descendant of David according to the flesh. He was born that descendant and declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection.

His lineage is royal. His lineage is Jewish. The Bible brings out to us the amazing, the amazing miracle that the eternal Son took on flesh and blood. Now think about that. He took on flesh and blood. He was born a Jew. Paul would write to Timothy in 2 Timothy

2:8 that Jesus was of the seed of David. The writer of Hebrews in that great sermon of exhortation would write in Hebrews 2:16 that he was the seed of Abraham. Isaiah would proclaim that he was the root of Jesse. And the conclusion of our whole Bible, Revelation 22:16, the Holy Spirit reminds us once again that Jesus Christ is the root and offspring of David. He is the David, the anointed one that was promised. And folks, what we have right now is the eternal Son of God now possessing full humanity in the flesh. He did not take on the nature of angels. Different nature, right? He took on the seed of Abraham. He took on flesh and blood. If you pinch yourself, if you cut your arm, make a hole and blood comes out, this is the type of flesh and blood the Son of God took on. He took on clay pot. He took on the dust, as it were, and the Almighty God took on human weakness.

Folks, he was made a little lower than the angels. Now think about that. The Almighty God, the Most High, the strength of all strength, the life of all life, humbled himself and took on human weakness. Jesus was born a baby. He had a body. He had a soul. He had a mind. He had no sin nature, hallelujah for that. He grew up. He had to tolerate sinful parents. He had to interact with sinful siblings. He had to live in the darkness of Nazareth. He had to learn to be a carpenter. Jesus knew what it was to go without food. He knew what it was to thirst. He knew what it was to grieve deeply in his soul. He knew what human sorrow feels like. He suffered. As he grew, he labored. Now think about this: he sweat. He had to take a bath. He had to be anointed like us. He had to have his feet washed like everyone else. And he died like human beings do, right, in our weakness? The great symbol of our weakness is that we die. Jesus took on human weaknesses. The Almighty took on our weaknesses. The Most High became the most low. How can we not just sit here and be totally stunned at such love as that? Human beings have a hard time being asked to just take a lower seat at a dinner table, let alone to leave the splendor of glory, the fellowship of the Father, the light of all lights, the beauty and infinite love expressed between the Father and the Son, and the Son comes and takes on human flesh and blood. Now I have meditated frequently on the type of love that this would demand and it always brings me to a state of wonder. I can't imagine myself being in a position like that and voluntarily – did you hear that – voluntarily take on such filthiness, darkness. To come knowing that he was going to die, to know that he would be sinless and yet he was to take the iniquity of us all? Surely God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. He came and took on flesh and blood.

The Lord of glory in deity took on human flesh and, folks, that human flesh, as I mentioned, felt the same things that you and I do. He felt the pains of words spoken. The frustration of unbelief that was expressed. He took upon himself the despicable debates of the disciples about who is the greatest. Notice no one said him, they always said them, right? He took on all that. He took on the fact that he would say to his disciples, "Do you not yet understand? Have I not been with you these many years and you don't know Me, Philip?" You can hear, right, the frustration of Jesus Christ in his soul.

And in contrast to that human weakness of him being on that tree, of him being imputed the iniquity of us all, of him bowing his head in worship, of saying, "Into Thy hands, Father, I commit My spirit," and he bows his head not in a gasp to try to get that last breath of air so that he could survive in this present world, but in a bowing of the head in

submission to the Father, he gave his body over to die because he had the last enemy that he had to defeat, death itself. And in three days and three nights, silence but no corruption, quietness but hope. Resting his head on that cloth in that tomb, that body watched over, death could not hold him. Why? Not one sin. The power of sin is the law and the power of death is sin. Death has no power over the sinless one, the righteous one, the Lamb of God, and so in contrast he took on human weakness but he was raised, look at verse 4, he was declared the Son of God with not weakness but what? Power. What kind of power? Life over death type of power, a resurrection type of power, so that now today at the throne of God, the glory of Jesus Christ is no longer veiled in human flesh but the glory is unveiled and the glory is revealed. We don't see it ourselves by looking upon him directly though there have been those who did look upon him directly. Think of Stephen, right? Jesus standing, welcoming him, overruling the courts of this life. His glory is unveiled. It is revealed. The resurrection of Jesus Christ enabled us to see him as he is through the pages of our Bibles; that the words in our Bible are not coming to us as believing people, people who are fully persuaded, people who have been born again from above, these words are not coming to us as information, these words are our life, these words are power, these words are grace being communicated to us; these words are peace being communicated to our soul. These words strength us. They feed us. They edify us. They build us up and we behold the glory of God in the mirror of the pages of Scripture.

We now can see him as he is, God in not a weak body but God in a glorified body sitting at the right hand of God. Hallelujah for that! There's a King, isn't there, and he's ruling and reigning and he's bringing all things under his feet. This is the conclusion of the Incarnation. This is the reason for the Christmas season. This is why he was born in the virgin's womb. This is why he took on human weakness, so that the power of God could be seen, or as Paul would write, I love this, even the weakness of God is stronger than men. Amen. There's no such thing as God's weakness, right, but even the weakness of God as expressed in the Son of God taking on flesh and blood, even the weakness of God is stronger than human men.

God's determination, he determined that Jesus' confession while he was on earth that he is the Messiah, that he is the Christ, that he is the Son of God, that he is God in human flesh, God the Father confirmed it with much assurance by him resurrecting his Son from the dead by the Holy Spirit and, folks, what that means is that all these passages, verse 2, that were promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, all the passages that declare that it's all about his Son who was born a descendant of David, all of those passages, they all cried at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, on that Sunday morning, that Lord's Day morning, they all stood up, as it were, and cried, "Amen! You did what You said!" And folks, we've got a whole Bible that says God does what he says and yet we still, I do, you do, right, even as believers we still doubt. Some verses from Genesis, Amen. Verses from Isaiah, Amen. Verses in Ezekiel, Amen. Everything was Amen and Amen. On that day, God declared, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased. Be raised!" And he came up right out of the grave.

Folks, you can't have more assurance than that, right, that he is who he said he was and that God is faithful and God is true. The Bible says that at the cross, God bared his arm.

Well, who was that? It was the Son of God. The Son of God is the arm of God and the Son of God was made bare. He hung on a tree. He was up between heaven and earth before Jews, before Gentiles, before kings. He was up in between all that. He bared his arm. He said, "Look at My arm. Look at My strength. Look at My glory." And when he resurrected him from the dead, he declared according to Psalm 2, "This is My chosen King." Mankind doesn't have to worry about who's gonna be King. It's already done, already said, already been foretold, already prophesied. It's all there. It's all in place. We are in the process today of seeing all things be brought to its conclusion in Christ Jesus. Remember, he is the Alpha, right? That's Greek for beginning. And he is Omega, which is Greek for the ending. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, Omega is the final letter in the Greek alphabet. And by the way, as one man has said, and he's all the letters in between. He's Alpha and Omega.

Folks, if Jesus Christ had been born, that he had grown, if he had experienced human weakness, if he had proclaimed a morality, if Jesus Christ would have remained in the grave like David, right, Peter says this, "David's tomb is still with us," right? If he would've remained in the grave, then we could just count him as an ordinary person, right? He's just like, who? He's just like us and he died for his own sins and he really wasn't the Son of God in human flesh. He wasn't deity. He wasn't the Word made flesh. He's just ordinary. He's just like us. But he's not like us. He's like us but he's not, right? He's deity in human flesh. If his body would have remained in the grave, we would have assumed that his death was a punishment for his presumption to be God in human flesh, but the resurrection, the most illustrative, the most convincing evidence that he was who he declared himself to be. He did not steal the label. He did not rob the title. He did not usurp the throne. He was who he said that he was.

In fact, folks, even, if there would have been – now think about this – if there would have been just a single sin that was laid on him, that was not propitiated, he would have stayed in the grave. If there had been one sin, one blemish, one mark, one transgression whether in action or in thought or in motive, if there would have been one single sin, he would have remained forever in the grave until this day because the wages of sin, even one sin, is what? It's death. But death could not hold him and, folks, that is the greatest assurance that you and I as believing people have that all of our sins past, present and future, they have been propitiated. God is satisfied with the death of his Son. If you would stand before God in his tribunal and he would judge you for your iniquity, it would be double jeopardy, he would be judging the sin not one time but twice and, folks, justice cannot do that. That sin was judged once by laying it on his dear Son.

And folks, the beautiful thing about this, the great thing about this is for 40 days, for 40 days he showed himself to select disciples. He had a personal meeting with Mary, several Marys. He had a private conversation with Peter and I'm sure Peter needed it. He showed himself at the gathering of that assembly. He just shows up. How would you like to have that, just here he is? They thought he was a ghost, right? They thought he was some spirit. And he looks at them and he says, "Look, do you have anything to eat around here?" They say, "Well, we have some fish over here." And he says, "Okay. Give Me some of that." He takes the fish and he, what? ("He eats it.") Folks, spirits don't eat. They

don't have, what? They don't have stomachs. They don't have a body. Everybody with me? He says, "Look, you got anything to drink?" He said, "Look, touch Me. Touch Me." How would you have liked to have touched him? John says, "We handled Him. We scrutinized Him. We touched Him." He's the Son of God in human flesh. You know, if he was here today in his resurrected body and we welcomed each other, you'd get to shake his hand. I think I'd just be on my face, right?

He's in that glorified body and it's that body that gives us hope that we too because we are in him, that we too will have a glorified body one day. You will, folks, you and I will never be apart, as it were, from a human body. You'll have one forever. You say, "Man, I don't want that." Look, it's not gonna be like this one. It's not gonna be weak. It's not gonna be corruptible. It's not gonna die. It's not gonna get sick. It's going to be perfectly suitable for the new heaven and new earth wherein dwells righteousness. It's gonna be perfectly suitable for the job that God has for you. Yes, you're going to be working in the new heaven and new earth, okay? You're just not gonna sit around with a harp for eternity, okay? Some of you may have harps for eternity, I won't, okay. But you know, God has a job for you. He's created you for something, amen?

And even now he's preparing you for that vocation and one day this glorified Son of God, the one who was declared the Son of God with power by his being resurrected from the dead, the Lord of lords and King of kings, this one went outside the city of Jerusalem in Galilee and the Bible says that he began to ascend up into a cloud. Can you imagine a human body ascending? Just feet just start lifting up? He goes up and the Bible says that he was blessing them as he was leaving. I don't know what he was saying but can you imagine? You talk about last words, you know? He's going up and they just stood there. They just stood there with their eyes, they're like... And an angel shows up and he says, "You men of Galilee, why are you staring? This Jesus," not another one, this Jesus, the one who died, buried, rose again, the one that has the glorified body, this one who's at the right hand of God, this one who came down, was born of the virgin Mary, "This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in just the same way as you watched Him go into heaven." You say, "How in the world is He gonna come?" Well, how did he go up? He ascended. How's he gonna come back? He's gonna descend. How did he go up? He ascended into a cloud. How's he gonna come back? He's gonna come out of the clouds.

Folks, I don't know what else to do to convince you that Christmas is about him but the pressure of a fallen world is always there for us to modulate that, to tone it down. Don't be so passionate about it. Folks, how can we not get excited about a baby who is the King? A baby who has a kingdom that is entered into by rebirth, by birth and belief and confession? A King that was foretold, a King that is the Lord, the God of glory, God's own Son? A King who died for his people? Wouldn't you like to belong to a kingdom whose King loves you that much? But he was raised from the dead. A King that has no end. Folks, he will never ever give up his throne. A King that has no end, a kingdom that has no end. Folks, the kingdoms of this earth have an end. Our nation has an end. We're working on it right now. His kingdom has no end. How long is that? That's hard to imagine, isn't it? Everlasting.

This King became a baby to whom now in his resurrected state that the kings of the earth resist, that the governments of this world take council against, who declare his reign as a lie, but one day these unbelieving nations will tremble at his presence. The King upon his resurrection was manifested, was confirmed, was declared, was amended as the Son of God and as the King of kings, and every knee, this is a quote from Isaiah, every knee will bow to him in that day. You will either bow in humble gratitude for his mercies, or you will bow in a begrudging, rebellious coercion, but you will bow to God's chosen King.

And folks, today, today is the day of your salvation, of salvation that was promised in times past by the prophets, a salvation that is concerning God's own Son, a salvation that was declared by his resurrection from the dead as being assured, and Peter would say this, "There is no other name," did you hear that, "no other name given among men by which we must be saved, Jesus Christ, the Son of God." And folks, this is exactly what we preach. It is the word of faith and it involves two parts of you: it involves your mouth, it involves your heart. We are to confess with our mouth that this man Jesus is the Son of God. He's the Lord of the Old Testament. I've been trying to do this, I'm reading through the Old Testament and I see the word "Lord" or "God" to think "Jesus." It's changed my whole look about everything. We're to confess this with our mouth. We're to tell others. This just isn't a confession that is one time that we are to confess. We are to say, "He is our Lord. He is God. He is the King of kings. He is the only One." And then secondly, we are to be fully persuaded in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, meaning that Jesus is living right now and that he is present here. He is active in the world and what he said will happen. This doesn't come by merely acknowledging these two things. It doesn't come by having some type of tradition that has been...maybe you've been brought up in a Christian home. No, this can't come to us merely in content, it has to come to us in a living content that changes who we are and what we say.

This is the life that God has promised through his Son. Do you know him? Are you his?

Let's pray.