

# Jesus Is Lord!

## Romans 1:3-4



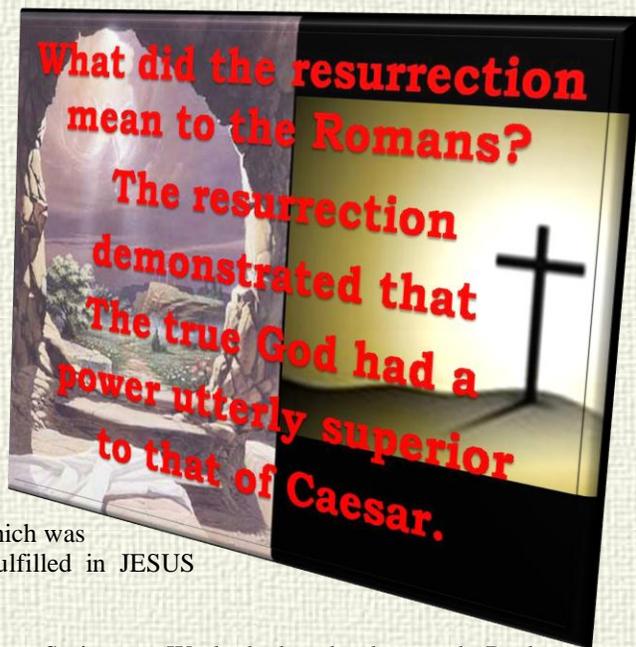
**W**e are still looking at Paul's salutation to the Romans in verses 1-7, which is packed with truth. Verse 1 starts, "Paul"...and then verse 7 says, *"to all who are beloved of God in Rome."* And in between he packs the Gospel in condensed form.

**Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, Romans 1:1 NASB**

The reference to the Gospel leads Paul to elaborate on its contents in verses 2-4:

**which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, Romans 1:2 NASB**

The Gospel was not an innovation of Paul's. It was neither a New Testament nor an apostolic invention. It was the message of the prophets, the message of Moses. The message of the First Testament is identical to that of the New. There is no segmentation between Israel's faith and Christianity; they are two halves of the whole. The Gospel, which was promised to Abraham and Moses and the prophets, was fulfilled in JESUS CHRIST.



The Gospel is a fulfillment of what was promised in the Hebrew Scriptures. We looked at that last week. Paul may have been thinking particularly of the promises that God made to Israel of a glorious future. The term "Good News" is used in Isaiah of the restoration promises to Israel. But as we saw last week, the "good news of Rome was that Caesar, the son of God, was now the lord of the whole world, claiming allegiance from everybody in return for bringing salvation and justice to the world.

Verses 3-4 introduce us to the substance of the Gospel that Paul preached.

**concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 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, Romans 1:3-4 NASB**

Luther said, *"This text has never been adequately interpreted by anyone,"* and then he proceeded to give the adequate interpretation. These verses are usually understood to be a pre-Pauline hymn or creedal formulation, which would mean that those early Christians were singing theology! Sebastian Bach said, *"The aim of all music is the glory of God."* For God to be glorified by our music, the words must be doctrinally correct. Do you know that we are taught through songs? Notice what Paul says:

**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16 NASB**

Notice that these *"psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"* were to be regarded as a method of *"teaching"* and *"admonishing"*; that being the case, it should be obvious that our music must be doctrinally sound. According to this verse, music is a teaching tool. Dr. Johnson once said, *"If he were allowed to make the ballads of a nation, he cared not who*

*made the laws. It is true in a more important sense that he who is permitted to make the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of a church need care little who preaches, or who makes its creeds. He will more effectually shape the sentiments of a church than they who preach or write the creeds.*" So, it is indispensable, in order to preserve the truth, that the music of a church must be doctrinally correct.

I believe that the Biblical ignorance in our churches is one cause of the abundance of unbiblical songs that we have today. A singer has no more right to sing a lie than a preacher has to preach a lie. The great songs of the faith were, for the most part, written by believers who knew the doctrines of the Word of God. Many so-called "Christian songs" today are written by people with little or no knowledge of the Word of God. It is a dangerous thing to separate the praise of God from the Word of God.

There are some who like to think of this text in [Romans 1:3-4](#) as teaching a contrast between the human and divine natures of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, that is probably not what the apostle is trying to say. If you want to see that, you need to go to Philippians:

**who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, Philippians 2:6-10 NASB**

This text is majestic, describing the condescension of the second person of the trinity into human incarnation. It is the single greatest passage in the New Testament on God becoming man.

This passage is a Christological gem. It teaches the doctrines of the [Incarnation](#), the [Kenosis](#), and the [Hypostatic union](#). This is rich theological ground. But I don't think that this is what Paul is speaking about in Romans 1:3-4.

Paul is saying that his "Good News" is from God, not Caesar, and this Good News is:

**concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, Romans 1:3 NASB**

The Gospel from God is centered on His Son. "**Concerning His Son.**" Whose Son? "**His**" is a reference to God, verse 1. The Gospel is a message about God's Son. Remember what we said last week about the historical context: To the Romans Caesar was a son of god. But Paul's Good News is about God's Son.

You can take Mohammed out of Islam and the message of Islam remains. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism, and his message retains its integrity; but if you remove Jesus Christ from the Gospel then you destroy it. It is the Gospel concerning His Son, Jesus Christ, that is absolutely central and indispensable to Christianity. The Gospel is about Jesus Christ, God's Son.

The grand aim from Genesis to Revelation is to reveal to us "**concerning His Son.**" That's why we must be careful not to use the Bible as a self-help book or a conglomeration of useful principles for business, family, education, and politics. It's a book about Christ!

Let's look at this term: "**Son of God.**" In the First Testament the term "**son of God**" is used to refer to angels:

**Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. Job 1:6 NASB**

But it is better known as a reference to *Israel*:

**"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is My son, My firstborn. Exodus 4:22 NASB**

**"With weeping they will come, And by supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, On a straight path in which they will not stumble; For I am a father to Israel, And Ephraim is**

**My firstborn." Jeremiah 31:9 NASB**

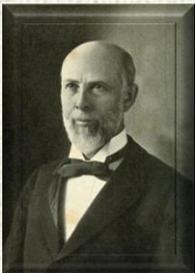
The reference to Jesus as the Son, recalls Israel's status as God's son. By calling Jesus the Son, Paul now assigns to Jesus the designation of Israel as God's son, which makes Jesus the *True Israel*. And since Jesus is God's true Son, then membership in the people of God depends on being rightly related to Jesus. Apart from a relationship to Jesus, you cannot be a true Israelite. As Paul teaches the Galatians, Jesus is the seed of Abraham:

**Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. Galatians 3:16 NASB**

The Jews would argue that the promises given to Abraham were only given to Israel since they were the seed or descendants of Abraham. But Paul tells us that promise was to the "*seed*," as distinguished from "*seeds*." Let me tell you what I see this verse as saying and then try to explain why. Paul is saying that the primary recipients of the Abrahamic covenant were Abraham and Christ. This, of course, would include all who are in Christ—believers. This promise is not realized in the Jews (Abraham's physical descendants), but Christians.

Apart from Paul's divinely inspired commentary, how many of us would have understood that Abraham's seed was Christ? Please listen: When the New Testament authors comment on a First Testament passage, they do not give *an* interpretation, but *THE* interpretation. The New Testament interprets the First. The Old Covenant was a veiled representation of the New Covenant.

It is in the New Testament that we learn that the material things of the Old Covenant were types and shadows of spiritual counterparts found in the New Covenant. We are to interpret the First Testament through the lens of the New Testament. We must understand that the last 27 books are a divinely inspired commentary on the first 39 books.



Milton S. Terry, in his book, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, writes: **"It is of the first importance to observe that, from a Christian point of view, the Old Testament cannot be fully apprehended without the help of the New"** (p. 18).

After Pentecost, the birth date of the Church, the Holy Spirit unlocked the previously hidden truths of the Old Covenant:

**"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to**

**come. John 16:12-13 NASB**

The interpretations that the New Testament authors provide are often very different than the prevailing teachings of today. For example, let's look at a First Testament prophecy and its New Testament fulfillment:

**"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. Malachi 4:5 NASB**

Without the New Testament, we would understand this to refer to a second coming of Elijah before the Second Coming of Christ. This is how the disciples saw it. As they had experienced the vision on the *Mount of Transfiguration*, they asked Jesus:

**And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Matthew 17:10 NASB**

They understood that Elijah was to show up before the Parousia of the Lord. But according to Jesus, they missed his coming:

**And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; <sup>12</sup> but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Matthew 17:11-12 NASB**

The disciples knew [the prophecy about Elijah](#), but they didn't understand that Elijah was a type that saw its fulfillment in John the Baptist. The prophecy of Malachi was **actually** fulfilled, but it was not **physically** fulfilled. John came in the Spirit of Elijah. Speaking to Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, the angel said:

**"And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1:17 NASB**

The Jews expected the reappearance of the literal Elijah, and John replies to that mistaken notion in:

**And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." John 1:21 NASB**

Jesus is telling them that if they want to understand the second coming of Elijah, they have got to look at the spiritual.

**"For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 "And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come. Matthew 11:13-14 NASB**

So we see that John the Baptist is the fulfillment of the prophecy of the coming of Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord. If Christ had not taught us that John was the Elijah to come, would Christians still be looking for Him?

When Paul says in [Galatians 3:16](#), **"The promises were spoken to Abraham and to His seed, that is, Christ,"** he is giving us the divinely inspired commentary of the Abrahamic covenant. Its promises are for all who are in Christ.

So when Paul calls Jesus Christ THE Son, he is saying that the Israel of God is not of physical descent, but those who are united to Christ:

**But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; Romans 9:6 NASB**

What does that mean? God never promised unconditionally to each offspring of Abraham covenantal blessings. God never intended that all of the nation Israel would be redeemed. Within national Israel is **"True Israel,"** or **"spiritual Israel."** The nation was chosen to be a vehicle of blessing to the world, but not all within the nation were chosen to salvation. The nation was elected to privilege, but only individuals are elected to salvation. Most Jews believed that all who were born of Jewish blood were saved by birth. They felt secure because they were **children of Abraham** and, therefore, in the covenant of promise. But Paul is teaching that only those in Christ, the True Israel, receive the promises made to Abraham.

Paul goes on to say that God's Son was, **"Born of a descendant of David"**—The NASB translates the Greek word [ginomai](#) as **"born,"** but it is normally translated: **"become."** The focus here is on the Davidic origin of the Son, which accords with the Jewish expectation that a ruler would come from David's line:

**Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:1-2 NASB**

This is a Messianic prophecy. Jesus is the shoot out of Jesse's stump. So this predicts that out of the lineage of David would come the Messiah. Now notice what Paul says:

**But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, 18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. Romans 11:17-18 NASB**

Believers, you and I, Gentile believers, have been grafted into God's olive tree. God didn't get upset with Israel and go out and plant a new tree as Dispensationalism teaches. He grafted us into Israel, through Jesus who is Israel. We cannot exist without our Jewish roots. You cannot exist independently of Jesus, nor can you exist independently of your Jewish roots. Because Jesus is not a tree, He is a shoot out of a tree, and the tree is Israel. Believers, our roots are Jewish. If we are to

understand Christianity, we must understand our Hebrew roots and therefore we must learn the first ¾ of the Bible. The Church is the true Israel of God. We inherit all the promises God made to True Israel.

Let me make one more comment on Isaiah 11: **"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit"**—the word **"branch"** is the Hebrew word **"nays̄ter,"** which is of the same Hebrew root, as Nazareth. The phonetic correspondence of this title in Isaiah 11:1 with the town of Nazareth is a play on words. The Branch comes from Nazareth!

We also see that Jesus was to come from David's line in:

**"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. "In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.' Jeremiah 23:5-6 NASB**

This righteous Branch is a descendant of David who is **"The Lord our Righteousness."** He comes from the lineage of David and He is LORD!

The New Testament writings often ascribe Davidic sonship to Jesus. In the first chapter of Luke, speaking of the birth of Jesus, it says three times that Jesus is the Son of David:

**"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; Luke 1:32 NASB**

Peter, in [Acts 2:30-35](#), clearly saw the resurrection and ascension of Christ as God exalted Him to the throne of David *in heaven*. Speaking to the Jews in the synagogue in Antioch, Paul said:

**"After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.' "From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, Acts 13:22-23 NASB**

Who is **"this man"** referring to? It is David. God made a promise to David:

**"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 2 Samuel 7:12-13 NASB**

God keeps His promises:

**"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? Numbers 23:19 NASB**

God always keeps His word, and He has promised a Savior King through the line of David:

**"For thus says the LORD, 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; Jeremiah 33:17 NASB**

In other words, when the Messiah was to come, it would be through David. Truly, God keeps His promises. The connection between Romans 1:2 and 3 should not be overlooked here. Jesus, as the Son of David, fulfilled the promise made in Hebrew Scriptures regarding a future ruler from David's line. I think that Paul is affirming here that Messiah came from the Jews.

Paul goes on to say that He **"was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh"**—this phrase **"according to the flesh"** is taken by many to refer to Jesus' human nature. Douglas Moo writes, **"Paul used the term 'flesh' to imply genuine humanity; mankind subject to all of the normal weaknesses of humanity; the transitory, weak, frail nature of that existence"** (Doug Moo, NICNT: Romans, 47).

The problem with this view is that “flesh” is never simply human nature for Paul. Flesh to Paul always carries negative overtones. The contrast between flesh and spirit run throughout this letter, and is common in Paul: Rom. 7:5-6; 8:2-13; Gal. 3:3; 4:29; 5:16-18,19-24; 6:8; Phil. 3:4.

The phrases "*according to the flesh*" *kata sarx* (v. 3) and "*according to the Spirit*" *kata pneuma* (v. 4) should be interpreted in redemptive historical terms, serving to elucidate the contrasting natures of the two covenant ages. "*According to the flesh*" being the product of the old age, and "*according to the Spirit*", a gift of the new age.

**so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:4 NASB**

Notice that it doesn't say that we might fulfill the law, but that it might be fulfilled in us. *We are passive*; God is the actor. What was the requirement of the Law? Righteousness. So who is righteous? It is the one who walks according to the Spirit. We could say, the one who walks in faith, trusting in Christ alone.

The flesh participates in the old age of sin and death. Jesus took on flesh and entered into the old age in order to inaugurate the new age. The age dominated by the flesh is one of weakness, while the age of the Spirit is one of power. Paul put it this way in Galatians:

**But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, Galatians 4:4 NASB**

Jesus was born under the Old Covenant, according to the flesh. Jesus was under the Law. Jesus was the one Man throughout all of history who obeyed the Law perfectly.

So Jesus was born “according to the flesh” he was born under the Law, but then:

**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, Romans 1:4 NASB**

*“Who was declared the Son of God”*—The word *“declared”* is translated from the Greek word *horizo*, which does NOT mean “declare” or “show.” Throughout the New Testament it consistently means: *“appoint, determine or fix.”* It literally means to *“mark out, set a boundary”* or *“to decree, to appoint, to set limits.”* The passive voice points to God the Father doing the appointing. The First Testament background for this appointing is found in:

**“But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.” “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Psalms 2:6-7 NASB**

Here the Davidic Son is decreed to be the anointed King. What Paul implies is that by Christ's resurrection He was singled out in a distinct way as the Son of God with power.

*“With power by the resurrection from the dead”*— it was the resurrection that marked Jesus out as *“Son of God.”* The resurrection reversed the verdict that the Jews would have placed on a crucified Messiah.

**“If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 NASB**

The Jews knew that Jesus had died by crucifixion, on a tree; therefore, according to Deuteronomy, he died under the curse of God. Thus, He could not possibly be the Messiah. Most of the Jewish people in Paul's day expected that the Messiah would come with power and political sway, and would defeat the oppressive rulers of the world, the Romans, and establish an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem and live forever triumphant with His people. Messiahs don't get arrested and beat up and mocked and crucified while leaving their people destitute. This was absolutely devastating. But the resurrection changed everything. Notice what Peter preached on the day of Pentecost:

**"Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. Acts 2:29-33 NASB**

The resurrection signals the new age has begun. In Judaism the resurrection of the dead was linked with the return from exile and the fulfillment of God's promises. So the resurrection of Jesus indicates that God has begun to fulfill His promises to Israel.

Let me quote Sam Frost: *"The promises were realized according to the Spirit, or in the spiritual realm, the heavenly city (Heb 12.22). Paul's assertion here is clear to any Jew: the promised seed-king of David's line has come and has been exalted, not on an earthly-fleshly throne, but on a heavenly throne. If that is the case, then the 'rule of God' spoken of in the Prophets has begun with the resurrection of Messiah and his ascension to the heavenly, true Tabernacle-Temple. Rome rules the world. Paul is asserting in this context of nationalistic-Jewish hopes that the kingdom has come, and is coming, and that it is heavenly, spiritual, not earthly, fleshly."*

So, to the Jews the resurrection meant that the new age had begun, the Messiah was seated on His heavenly throne and ruling.

What did the resurrection mean to the Romans? In the Roman world, Caesar had the power of death. Threats to Roman rule were mercilessly crushed. Everyone in the Roman world knew that the cross had a clear symbolic meaning; it meant that Caesar ruled the world with cruel death as his ultimate, and regular, weapon. The problem, from the standpoint of Roman rule, is that Jesus didn't stay dead. The resurrection demonstrates that the true God has a power utterly superior to that of Caesar. Rome crucified Jesus. But God raised Him from the dead and made Him LORD!

**"Resurrection from the dead"**—the word **"dead"** is plural in the Greek. When it says **"by the resurrection of the dead ones,"** all of us are included in it. It is the hint of a promise there. It was His resurrection, but in His resurrection was the future resurrection of the dead. For Paul, the resurrection was something that would happen at the end of the age. Paul saw the resurrection of Jesus demonstrating Him to be the Son of God and also showing that the end of the age was near.

**"According to the Spirit of holiness"**—the phrase "the Spirit of holiness" is an exact equivalent of the Hebrew for the Holy Spirit in [Psalm 51:11](#) and [Isaiah 63:10](#), leading to the conclusion that it is here identical with deity!

**Jesus Christ our Lord**— this is the Gospel. **"Jesus"** is the name the angel told Joseph to use for the baby that would be born because **"He will save His people from their sins"** ([Matt. 1:21](#)). That name refers specifically to Him as Savior. **"Christ"** can be translated as Messiah or Anointed One, so it refers to Christ as the Messiah or the Promised One. In the First Testament era, prophets, priests, and kings were all anointed for their particular office, showing that they were set apart by God to function in that way toward His people. Christ combines all three offices as God's Anointed. He's the **Prophet** that speaks God's Word to us; the **Priest** that mediates the way to God for us; and the **King** who rules over us. **"Lord"** calls to mind His sovereign rule over us.

The Greek word **"Lord"** is [kyrios](#), the word by which citizens of the Roman Empire acknowledged the divinity of Caesar. But it is not Caesar who is Lord, it is Jesus.

The Hebrew word for **"Lord"** is [Adonai](#). The name *Adonai* assumed an extraordinary importance in Hebrew speech, for in practice it replaced the personal name of God, YHWH. No Jew pronounced the word "YHWH," even when reading the Bible. Instead he said, "Adonai." Not only in popular speech but also in Jewish literature and in the writing and transmission of the First Testament, the word "Adonai" became almost synonymous with YHWH, the personal name of God. So when Paul calls Jesus, Lord, he is saying that Jesus of Nazareth is the God of Israel, YHWH, the only true God.

Paul contends that Jesus is the true Son of God. He is the True Israel. The promises regarding the vindication of Israel have been fulfilled in Him. The promises of a Davidic king and a Messiah also apply to Jesus. Since the Messiah and True Israel have come, the promises that speak of blessing the whole world through Abraham are now **being** fulfilled. And Paul is

bringing this Good News to the whole world.



This message was preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on October 31, 2010. Media #526.

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