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What do we know about Jesus?

Jesus Christ is God's final and fullest revelation of what He is like. But what exactly do we know about Jesus – especially about his person and purpose? How important is he in the purpose of God, and exactly what is the relationship between God and Jesus? These are big questions for us to think about but, as we have already seen, they are vital ones too. Jesus himself said that our eternal life depends upon our knowing God and himself; or, as he put it:

“This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

We have been using the letter the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans as our starting-point in all these considerations. We will follow through Paul's explanation of what comprises the gospel of God when we have sorted out these preliminary and vital issues.

So, what do we learn from Romans about the person, nature and work of the Lord Jesus? This time we will look at the first eight chapters to see what Paul said about him. If you are reading the Letter with your notebook close at hand, you might want to do that exercise first and then compare your findings with this list.



“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15)

Romans	What we learn about Jesus
1:1	Jesus is Paul's Lord and Master; he called him to be an apostle
1:2	He is Son of God; descended from David “according to the flesh” and declared to be God's Son by his resurrection
1:7	Both the Father and the Lord Jesus extend grace and peace
1:1,9	The gospel of God is also the gospel of His Son
2:16	God will judge mankind by Jesus Christ
3:22,24	If we have faith in Jesus we can be counted right with God, for Jesus brings redemption
5:6,8,10	Christ died for the ungodly – for us!
5:15-19	Where a man (Adam) brought death and destruction, another man (Jesus) has undone that damage
6:4	If we are united with Jesus – in his death and resurrection, by baptism – we can start a new life
6:9	The risen Lord Jesus is no longer subject to death
8:3	God has sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to enable us to fulfil the righteous requirements of the Law
8:34,39	Jesus was raised from the dead (by God) and now sits at God's right hand to intercede for us, for he too loves us!

This brief survey makes one thing evident: Jesus Christ is right at the centre of the purpose of God. He is an absolutely vital part of the gospel of God for it is through him, and only through him, that we can be reckoned to be “right with God”. He can redeem us from sin and death because he has undone the damage Adam did to humanity. Sitting at God’s right hand in heaven, having been raised from the dead by God, Jesus is now immortal and will intercede for us because he loves us.

❖ Jesus the Man

Three times when explaining the importance of the work of Jesus Paul refers to the way that Jesus was born and his resulting nature. Here are the passages:

*“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, **who was descended from David according to the flesh** and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 1:1-4);*

*“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned ... For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that **one man Jesus Christ** abounded for many ... If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through **the one man Jesus Christ**” (5:12-17);*

*“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. **By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh** and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us” (8:3,4).*

There are some very important points being made here, though they may not be immediately obvious. First Paul explains that the Lord Jesus Christ was a member of the human race, descended from King David. Then he puts him

side-by-side with Adam, for Jesus is the man who undid the trouble which Adam brought into the world. Where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded. It was the righteousness of Jesus that cancelled out the effects of Adam’s unrighteousness. Thus sin was condemned in the very place where it had been most effective – “*in the flesh*” (this phrase is another way of saying “within human nature”). Jesus was obedient to his Father in everything, so that where Adam had failed he succeeded. This contrast between Adam and Jesus is highlighted by Paul in Romans chapter 5, as we shall see. But there are important points for us to understand at this stage:

1. This great reversal of human fortune was made possible because God sent His Son and then raised him from the dead to sit at His own right hand, in power and great glory.
2. Jesus was a man, not a God who had come in human form, for he was tempted but obeyed, and he died, being mortal not immortal.¹
3. He obeyed, suffered and died for us, to save us from sin and to show us how to live in a way which is right with God.

❖ Descended from David

Why do you think the first thing Paul says about Jesus is that he was descended from David, rather than from Adam? The clue is in that opening verse of Romans where the apostle says that he was: “*set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh*”. A prophet once told

¹ It was a pagan teaching that immortal gods could become man and live among mortals and some people have still got those beliefs about the coming of Jesus into the world. The Bible does not teach that, for God is immortal (and can therefore never die); He is sinless (and could therefore never be tempted to sin); and if He had appeared on earth in person no one would have survived the experience (see 1 Timothy 6:16; Exodus 33:20). Jesus did not live in heaven before he came into existence on earth, for he inherited from his mother Mary those characteristics that made him a descendant both of Adam and of King David. God knew that he would be born in course of time, so in that sense he existed in the mind of God. But he did not come into being until he was born of Mary, and thus became the “offspring” of the woman (Genesis 3:15).

David that one day he would have a mighty descendant who would rule over his kingdom for ever. Paul was announcing that Jesus was that long-awaited one, whose coming had been prophesied.

We have seen already that the life of Jesus was wonderfully portrayed in advance by the prophets of God, hundreds of years before his birth fulfilled those detailed predictions.² This ability to forecast future events with absolute accuracy is one of the evidences that God exists and that His Word is absolutely true. We looked at some of those predictions but there are far more than we considered.³ The coming of Jesus – the Old Testament Messiah – is a vitally important aspect of God’s gracious purpose.

The very first promise that God made to mankind concerned the coming of a Saviour and Deliverer who would rescue mankind from sin and death (Genesis 3:15). As time passed more and more promises were made about this Coming One. Abraham was told that this Saviour would bring a blessing to all nations (Genesis 22:17,18); Moses was told that he would be “a prophet like you” (Deuteronomy 18:18); Joshua had the very same name as Jesus, and he took Israel into the promised Land.⁴ And when kings ruled in Israel, from about 1000 B.C. onwards, God’s promises were enlarged accordingly.

King David was a man who was much loved by God,⁵ and he reigned over the nation of Israel which then constituted God’s kingdom on earth.⁶ Because it was God’s kingdom, not his own, David had no right to expect that his family would continue as rulers. None of his predecessor’s children had succeeded to the throne. King Saul and his three sons had all died in battle and, as he was Israel’s very first king, there was no clear understanding about a kingly line. It must have left everyone feeling very uncertain about things, especially about any long-term plans they might

² In Chapter 2, pages 17-21

³ You might, for example, want to read Isaiah chapter 53, in which the saving work of the promised Messiah is described in detail, some 700 years before Jesus was born.

⁴ “Joshua” is Hebrew; “Jesus” is Greek – both names mean “God is Saviour”.

⁵ God once said of David: “I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will” (Acts 13:22).

⁶ There is much more about the Kingdom of God in Chapter 20.

have had for the kingdom.

God met those concerns by making David some long-term promises and by setting out what he and his descendants needed to do, if they wanted to continue as His appointed kings. We will have occasion to look in more detail at these promises later, when we investigate Bible teaching about the Kingdom of God and Israel’s role in the purpose of God. For our present purposes we need to notice just one aspect of what David was promised, though you will find it helpful to read the whole of 2 Samuel Chapter 7, if you are not already familiar with it. Here is the part we are looking at now:

*“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, **I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body**, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. **I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.** When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:12-16).*

David’s descendant – and the language is very particular in saying “*who shall come from your body*” – was the one who would ensure the continuance of the kingdom. There was to be one very important descendant – a special son. After David’s days (about 1000 years later as it turned out), that son was indeed born, “*descended from David*” (Romans 1:3), and he was also God’s own Son. David had many other descendants before that, of course, and a succession of them ruled as kings in Jerusalem for more than 350 years.

Many of the kings who reigned on David’s throne were very sinful and were disciplined by God. Eventually the kingdom of God came to an end when the last king – a man named Zedekiah – was removed from the throne. A period of over 600 years followed during which time Israel had no king at all. Their only hope of political independence was what the prophets had foretold: the coming of a Saviour and Deliverer. For, when the kingdom was coming to an end, the prophet Ezekiel had said that it would be no more,

until the coming of a promised Deliverer who would reign as King:

*“Thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban and take off the crown. Things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted. A ruin, ruin I will make it.⁷ **This also shall not be, until he comes, the one to whom judgement belongs, and I will give it to him**” (Ezekiel 21:26,27).*

So, when the apostle began his letter to the Romans by announcing that Jesus was descended from King David, “according to the flesh”, he was saying that the long-awaited Deliverer had come. For, in the same sentence, Paul said both that he was David’s descendant and that he was “Son of God”. Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead – a sort of second birth, after which he was given immortal life by God.

This does not mean that Jesus only became the Son of God when he was raised by God from the dead. Scripture makes it clear that Jesus was God’s Son from the moment he was born (see Luke 1:35). What becomes clear is that God took several opportunities to announce the fact that Jesus was His Son, and that He was pleased with the way that Jesus was behaving. He said so at his baptism (Matthew 3:17), at the transfiguration (17:5) and, as Paul now comments, the resurrection from the dead was the final seal of God’s approval. He was “declared to be the Son of God in power ... by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).

❖ Descended from Adam

The phrase “according to the flesh” tells us rather more than the fact that King David was a member of the family tree to which Jesus also belonged. That is true enough, as the genealogy of Jesus demonstrates.⁸ But when Matthew records the ancestors of Jesus he starts, much like Paul, with this statement:

⁷ The kingdom that had existed in Israel was to be brought to an end. King Zedekiah was the last of Israel’s kings to reign from Jerusalem. His reign ended in 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians and its inhabitants were deported to Babylon.

⁸ Jesus has two family trees (one in Matthew chapter 1:1-16; the other in Luke chapter 3).

*“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of **David**, the son of **Abraham**” (Matthew 1:1).*

His particular emphasis, for he was writing especially for Jews, was to show that Jesus was the long-awaited descendant of both Abraham and David – the one about whom those great promises had been made. Matthew is thus content to take the family tree as far back as Abraham, the father of the Jewish race, but no further. Luke, who wrote for different readers, probably for Gentile ones, takes the family tree right back to its very origins, ending with:

*“the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of **Adam**, the son of God” (Luke 3:36-38).*

God formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed the spirit of life into him. Jesus was born, “according to the flesh,” of the virgin Mary, and that very expression carries a lot of meaning. Paul has a lot to say about what it means to be born in that way. Later in his letter to Rome, he will say these things:

*“While we were living **in the flesh**, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death ... For I know that nothing good dwells **in me, that is, in my flesh**. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing ... So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but **with my flesh** I serve the law of sin ... For those who live **according to the flesh** set their minds on the **things of the flesh**, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind **on the flesh** is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set **on the flesh** is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are **in the flesh** cannot please God” (Romans 7:5,18-19,25; 8:5-8).*

This is a remarkable condemnation of human nature. The apostle confirms what we considered earlier, that human nature was perverted after Adam’s sin.⁹ It is now

⁹ In Chapter 5, pages 54-57.

naturally inclined away from God. In our lives we seek to please ourselves first and foremost. As Paul now expresses it, “we set (our) minds on the things of the flesh” and are by nature “hostile to God” because we do not want to submit to His righteous Law. It requires a personal decision and a change of will before we can change direction and seek the things of God. The apostle Paul calls this new direction living “according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:4,5).¹⁰

❖ Born “according to the flesh”

Consider the huge implications of what the Spirit-guided writer meant when, at the start of this letter, Paul said that the Lord Jesus Christ was born “according to the flesh” (Romans 1:3). For his language to be consistent throughout the letter, he must have been saying that Jesus was born with the very same nature we have. It is the nature we have inherited from our forefather Adam. So Jesus also shared:

- instincts and feelings which tempted him to please himself rather than his Father; and hence
- a natural inclination not to want to obey God.

Not only does Paul tell us this – it is the consistent teaching of the New Testament. When Jesus was born he inherited our nature and fully shared our problems, both from within and without. Here is some of this teaching; the first quotation is especially emphatic:

*“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, **he himself likewise partook of the same things**, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he **had to be made like his brothers in every respect**, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because **he himself has suffered when tempted**, he is able to help those who are being tempted”* (Hebrews 2:14-18);

¹⁰ See Chapter 15, pages 219-224, where life “according to the Spirit” is considered in detail.

*“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one **who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin**”* (Hebrews 4:15);

*“He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, **not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God**. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (John 1:11-14);

*“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – **the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions** – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever ... every spirit that confesses that **Jesus Christ has come in the flesh** is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God”* (1 John 2:15-17; 4:2-3).

When you take stock of what these Scriptures are really saying, it is clear that Jesus was born with the very same feelings and desires we experience. It had to be like that if he was to experience exactly what we feel and yet overcome those feelings. Further you will notice that people who teach that Jesus did not share our nature are “not from God” – a strong statement by the apostle John that warns us of the importance of understanding the right things about God’s purpose.

❖ Tempted but not Overcome

There is an important distinction, however, that we need to understand at this stage. We have seen that Scripture describes the Lord Jesus as a man – just as Adam was. The contrast between the two of them is central to Paul’s argument in Romans chapter 5 and elsewhere:

*“If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned **through that one man**, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life **through the one man Jesus Christ**”* (Romans 5:17);

*“For as in **Adam** all die, so also in **Christ** shall all be made alive ... The **first man Adam** became a living being; the **last Adam** became a life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:22,45).*

Paul does not say that Jesus assumed the form of mankind, or that he was a man for a temporary phase of his existence. He was and is a man. Even in his present existence in heaven, now that Jesus has been made immortal and has been glorified, he is still a man. Sitting at God’s right hand he can now act as our go-between with God – our mediator. He is ideally suited for that role because he knows exactly what we are going through as we struggle against sin. And when he comes back to earth to judge the world on God’s behalf, Jesus will still be a man – for that is his essential nature. It is the hallmark of everything that Jesus accomplished that although he shared our nature he overcame that nature and was not overcome by it, as everybody else had been. That may be why his favourite way of referring to himself was as “Son of man” : ¹¹

*“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**” (1 Timothy 2:5);*

*“The **Son of Man** is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the **Son of Man** coming in his kingdom” (Matthew 16:27,28);*

*“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness **by a man whom he has appointed**; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).*

The remarkable and wonderful thing that happened when Jesus was born and lived on earth is that, although he was tempted and tried in just the same way we are, he never once sinned. This is the vital difference that we need to be quite clear about. When we are tempted to do wrong things, by thoughts that naturally occur to us, the thought

¹¹ The expression “Son of man” occurs 84 times in the gospels.

itself is not wrong. Jesus himself said that happens naturally: it is part of the human condition. We sin when we give way to those thoughts and let the ideas develop unchecked, until they become things that we want to do.

We have already considered this, but two of the Scriptures we looked at then will remind us that temptation is not sin: ¹²

*“What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For **out of the heart come evil thoughts**, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person” (Matthew 15:17-20);*

*“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then **desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death**” (James 1:13-15).*

❖ Sinless Son of God

Jesus was tempted and tried by all sorts of things, sometimes even by his disciples when they wanted him to avoid the cross and find an easier way. He had powers and opportunities open to him that do not trouble us,¹³ and he was pushed to limits of suffering and sorrow that we do not experience, and that helped his spiritual development.¹⁴ Notwithstanding all that, the marvellous thing is that Jesus never once broke God’s law in thought, word or deed. You can hear the note of wonder in the Scriptures that record that remarkable achievement:

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every

¹² See also Chapter 5, page 56.

¹³ Jesus was given the Holy Spirit – the power of God – without limitation (John 3:34) and had resources available to him, that he could have used to serve himself, that we have no access to. Thus his temptations were more challenging than any we will ever face. Even so he overcame.

¹⁴ Several Scriptures (like the one from Hebrews 5:7-9 quoted on page 92) explain that Jesus progressed during his life on earth. Step by step he advanced towards perfect obedience, never once failing in the process.

respect has been tempted as we are, **yet without sin**" (Hebrews 4:15);

"In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, **he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:7-9);

"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:21-23);

"For our sake he made him to be sin **who knew no sin**, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21);

"Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practises lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and **in him there is no sin**" (1 John 3:5).

❖ "Not my will"

That Jesus overcame temptation is one of the wonders of the Word of God and we should be both appreciative and grateful. It was no easy accomplishment; far from it! If we ever think that Jesus was not really tempted, but only appeared to be struggling against sin, think about his inner struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was in a garden setting – in Eden – that Adam had failed. Now the man whom God had sent to undo all the resulting harm was to be found in a garden in earnest prayer to his Father.

"When he came to the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.' And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, **not my will, but yours, be done.**' And there appeared to him an angel from heaven,

strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:40-44).

It clearly took an act of will on the part of the Lord Jesus to go through everything that he knew faced him. Remember that, unlike us, his life had been mapped out in advance,¹⁵ and thus he had a detailed picture of what was coming – the suffering, shame, public humiliation, separation from God, his betrayal, the estrangement of his disciples and much more. No wonder he was "in agony"; but how marvellous that he was willing to endure all that for us. Someone had come, at long last, who was willing to set his own will aside so that he might accomplish all that his Father wanted. It was a vital turning point in the history of the human race; again one that had been anticipated in the Old Testament Scriptures.

❖ Willing and Obedient

A thousand years before Jesus was born, King David had been inspired by God to write these words about a coming Deliverer:

*"Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: **I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart**'"* (Psalm 40:6-8).

To have God's law in the heart is to want to do God's will more than you want to please yourself. David had himself been a man after God's own heart, but he had been unable to let God's will rule his life at all times, and on one occasion he failed very badly indeed. So David was not writing about himself or his achievements. He was predicting that the time would come when someone would be born who would read the Scriptures, identify fully with what was described there, and then willingly comply with all that was required. It would mean setting aside human free-will to become God's servant, precisely what the prophet Isaiah wrote about in four prophecies known as the four "Servant Songs" (to be found in Isaiah chapters 42, 49, 50 and 53).

¹⁵ Chapter 2, pages 17-19

We have already reviewed some of the things the writer to the Hebrews said about the wonderful achievements of Jesus, earlier in this chapter. He notes what David had written, in Psalm 40, and shows that Jesus entirely fulfilled those requirements. First he explains that it was Jesus who read the Psalm and saw it applied to him:

“When Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me ...’” (Hebrews 10:5).

If you are reading carefully, you will notice that the Psalmist wrote “*you have given me an open ear*” and the New Testament citation of that Psalm reads “*a body have you prepared for me*”. The first is in the original Hebrew and the second has been translated into Greek, hence the difference. Jews and Greeks had their own special ways of describing a servant or a slave. For the Jew it was someone who was always listening out for the Master’s command.¹⁶ When the Greeks described slaves, however, they thought of them as mere bodies, available to serve them.¹⁷

Jesus fully accepted that his role was to be a servant or slave of God – even though he was His only Son! (John 3:16); the more he read about his destiny in the Scriptures, the more willing he was to do the will of God. Having quoted the passage from the Psalm, the writer then explains the consequences of such perfect and unselfish obedience. A man has perfectly obeyed God as an act of total obedience and, in so doing, has fulfilled the law of God absolutely. So, he explains:

“When he said above, ‘You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings’ (these are offered according to the law), then he added, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will.’ **He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”** (Hebrews 10:8-10).

¹⁶ For example, in one of the Servant Songs: “The LORD God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious” (Isaiah 50:5).

¹⁷ Revelation 18:13 uses the same Greek word to describe slaves, and then explains what is meant – “cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves (lit: bodies), that is, human souls”.

The perfect obedience of Jesus has made possible the removal of the requirements of the law, which had proved impossible to keep because of human weakness, and its replacement by a new order of things. The wonder of it is that through the willingness of Jesus to be God’s Servant and to obey Him in every respect, it became possible for us to be counted right with God. That’s something we need to look at more closely in the next chapter.

❖ Rewarded for Obedience

There is one other Scripture to consider which also talks about Jesus fulfilling the role of a Servant, for it adds a new thought to our considerations so far. Again it is the apostle Paul who writes:

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:5-11).

Jesus perfectly obeyed everything his Father asked of him, including dying on the Cross, in a painful and shameful way. There was nothing automatic or pre-arranged about this. As we have seen, Jesus understood what he was being asked to do and did it, completely and willingly. He was the Son of God and might have expected, or even demanded, some recognition of that remarkable status. Instead he set any such claims aside and did his Father’s will. Because of that God raised him from the dead, rewarded him with the gift of immortality, and raised him to glory at His right hand in heaven. Jesus was exalted above all others *because* he was faithful and obedient.

Now every one of us should bow the knee before Jesus and acknowledge him as “*Lord*”, to the glory of God the Father. How carefully Scripture distinguishes between Father and Son and their respective roles, but what a blend

of divine activity we see as Father and Son work together to accomplish the great purpose of redeeming mankind. It is that work accomplished by Father and Son, in perfect union, which the apostle Paul now begins to consider as he writes to the believers at Rome.

Things to Read

- 📖 Matthew 26:26-46 contains a description of the agony that Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane and his wonderful self-control. It shows that it was a real struggle for him to overcome his natural inclinations so that he would obey his Father in all things.
- 📖 Isaiah chapter 53 is one of the four Servant Songs recorded by the prophet. It tells of the suffering that Jesus would endure and how he would be saved out of it (see verse 12).

Questions to Think About

- 7.1 For Jesus to have been tempted in every way that we are tempted he must have had the same nature as us. What does the Bible say about our natural tendencies and feelings? (Jeremiah 17:9,10; Mark 7:18-23; Galatians 5:19-21; James 1:13-16)
- 7.2 What was Jesus given by God as a reward for his faithful obedience? (Acts 2:32-36; Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 5:11-12)



"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:21-22).