

Acts 13:32-37

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Paul tells his Galatian audience that God has fulfilled His promise of a Savior in their lifetime. Jesus is God's Son and God would not let His Son stay dead. He raised Him back to life, as the scriptures foretold.

Paul continues his synagogue sermon in Pisidian Antioch. He has shown his audience how God was at work throughout the Old Testament. He made promises to the Hebrew patriarchs and has kept them; He led the Israelites out of slavery into their own land, and gave them a righteous king, David, to whom God made another promise—one of David's heirs would be a king over Israel forever (2 Samuel 7:12-6).

This heir was Jesus, God's Messiah, both the son of David and the Son of God, who fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. Israel rejected and killed Jesus the Messiah. But God raised Jesus from the dead, and many witnesses saw Him after His resurrection. They have preached to this day that the Messiah is alive.

Here Paul tells his audience of Jews and Gentile proselytes in Galatia what Jesus's resurrection really means. Jesus's resurrection is the fulfilment of God's promises, and it means good news for all who hear it:

And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers (v. 32).

The phrase *preach good news* is derived from the same Greek word from which we get "evangelize." Our word "gospel" is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning the same thing (god = 'good,' spell = 'story, news'). Preaching the gospel or evangelizing simply means to proclaim the good news of the Messiah Jesus and His coming Kingdom.

Paul declares his purpose for being there in Galatia; he and Barnabas, like the witnesses of Jesus, *preach the good news of the promise made* by God to *the fathers*, their Jewish ancestors. Based on the following prophecies Paul will quote, it seems he is specifically referring to the Davidic covenant, *the promise* of a King descended from David who would rule forever (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

The good news is that *God has fulfilled this promise to our children* (v. 33). This can also be rendered as "God has fulfilled this for us their children." The point seems to be that this generation who has seen Jesus is the generation which has seen this *promise fulfilled*. Since Paul is speaking to a Jewish audience in this synagogue sermon, those hearing his words are heirs to the promise given to Abraham, David, and their descendants.

The fulfilment of the *promise* is that *God raised up Jesus*. *God raised up Jesus* in two senses, one in that He awarded Him rulership as a Son (Matthew 28:18), and the other in that He raised *Jesus* from the dead. Paul quotes several psalms to illustrate this promised raising:

as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You' (v. 33).

This is quoted from Psalm 2:7.

The author of Hebrews (possibly Paul, or someone influenced by Paul's teaching) also quotes this psalm, speaking of Jesus (Hebrews 1:5). This idea of being *begotten* as a *Son* is language from ancient times referring to when a great ruler (Suzerain) esteemed a faithful vassal or servant as an inheritor through an "adoption" ceremony.

[For more information, read our article "Suzerain-Vassal Treaties."](#)

If a master had a faithful servant, he could name his servant as an inheritor in his kingdom by calling him *Son*, saying in an adoption ceremony, "You are my son, today I have begotten you." This ceremony came with an inheritance (which was usually rulership over a province or land).

Jesus was rewarded with rulership over the entire world for His faithfulness in obeying His Father, even to the point of dying on a cross (Philippians 2:8-11; Hebrews 1:8, 13; Revelation 3:21).

Paul points to the Scriptures again, showing the promises given to King David that have now been fulfilled in David's descendant, Jesus:

As for the fact that God raised Jesus up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken (in Isaiah 55:3) in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David' (v 34),

In this verse from Isaiah 55, God is offering mercies to those who will accept them. To the person who goes to and listens to God, He offers the *holy and sure blessings of David*, which leads Paul then to note one of the *blessings of David*, the promise of resurrection and eternal life:

Therefore He also says in another Psalm (Psalm 16:10), 'You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay' (v. 34-35).

Paul continues to appeal to the Scriptures to show the truth of who Jesus is and what God accomplished through Him.

Since his audience are Jews and converted Gentiles gathered in a synagogue, who know and believe God's word, Paul is quoting from God's word to show how Jesus did the things that were promised. Jesus was God's *Holy One*, His sinless and blameless servant.

Jesus received the *holy and sure blessings of David* as shown when God resurrected His body, keeping His flesh from decomposing, and giving Him new life so that He did not *undergo decay*. In being resurrected, Jesus defeated death. He is raised to new life and elevated above every name in heaven and upon the earth (Matthew 28:18).

Paul invokes this psalm similarly to how Peter, in his sermon at Pentecost, used it to explain how the scriptures predicted the Messiah's resurrection (Acts 2:31-32).

King David did ultimately die, and his body decomposed. Paul says,

For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay (v. 36);

David was a type, a forerunner to the Messiah, but was a man born from man and woman. He was a great king, and a man who lived a life that pleased God (2 Samuel 22:21-25), yet as a man he had a sinful nature and did terrible things too (2 Samuel 11:3-4, 1 Kings 15:5).

He served the purpose of God in his own generation; he lived as a servant to God in the time given to him, in a finite lifespan, then died, *fell asleep*, and was buried in a tomb *among his fathers*, the dead who died before him. Accordingly, since he died he *underwent decay*. David's body became bones and then dust.

But Jesus, who also *served the purpose of God in His own generation*, and for every *generation* to come, did not stay dead:

but He whom God raised did not undergo decay (v. 37).

Paul points to the power and will of God as the reason Jesus was *raised* from the dead. Jesus's body *did not undergo decay*. He is alive. The psalm spoke of His resurrection and His eternal life. Since Jesus the Son of David is alive, and will be alive forevermore, He is now able to take the throne of David and sit on it for all generations. He is able to fulfill the prophecy of 2 Samuel 7:13 to establish a throne of David forever. Paul's point is that it is through Jesus that God will fulfill the promises made to the descendants of Abraham and the descendant of David. This is, indeed, good news to the Jewish people.

Biblical Text

³² And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, ³³ that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You.' ³⁴ As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' ³⁵ Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.' ³⁶ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; ³⁷ but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.