

Lesson 9 at StudyRomans.org

Romans 1:3, Continued

Romans 1:3 — concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh

Last week we started looking at verse 3, and the first thing we noted is that Paul refers to Jesus directly in eight of the first nine verses of this letter. That fact tells us a great deal about Paul's focus and especially his focus in this letter.

So far, Paul has told us that he is a servant of Christ, that he is an Apostle of Christ, and that God's gospel of Christ had been promised by the Old Testament prophets.

In verse 3, Paul tells us something more about Jesus: he "was descended from David according to the flesh." Two questions: what does that mean, and why does Paul tell us that here?

Let's start with the first question: what does it mean that Jesus "was descended from David according to the flesh"?

To answer that question, all we need to do is turn to either Matthew 1 or Luke 3. In each of those chapters we find a genealogy of Christ, and, in each of those genealogies, we find that Jesus was a descendant of King David according to the flesh. (As for why we have two different genealogies that still manage to agree in various spots, please see Lesson 6 on Ezra and Esther, where we discussed those questions in great, and some might say excruciating, detail.)

For now, our question is different — our question is what it means for Jesus to be descended from **King David**. After all, David was part of a lengthy line of kings — why this sudden focus here on just one of those kings?

We can answer that question with a single word — **covenant**. Verse 3 is focused on the connection between Christ and King David that comes from a covenant that God made with King David — a covenant that we call the **Davidic Covenant**.

When we think of the Davidic Covenant, we should all immediately think of Psalm 89 because there is no other place in the Bible that reveals the Davidic Covenant more clearly than does Psalm 89.

Psalms 89:3-4 (ESV) — You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ‘I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.’”

And later in that same Psalm we learn something crucial about the Davidic Covenant — it was **unconditional**.

Psalms 89:30-37 (ESV) — If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.”

God was going to fulfill his covenant with David without regard to whether the people were faithful or faithless. God's promise to David was an unconditional promise.

And what was that promise that would most certainly occur? It was God's promise to David that his offspring would rule from his throne for all generations.

And that great promise to King David was fulfilled when Jesus came and occupied the throne of David that had been unoccupied ever since Zedekiah had been carried off to Babylon. That restoration of the kingdom to Israel is what the Apostles asked Jesus about in Acts 1:6, and that restoration of the kingdom to Israel is what the angel proclaimed to Mary in Luke 1.

Luke 1:30-33 (ESV) — And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. **And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.**"

And what that means is that Jesus reigns today as King of kings and Lord of lords over the entire universe **from the throne of King David**.

And, of course, that final phrase "according to the flesh" is very important as well. It is a reminder that Jesus is both the Son of David and the Son of God. Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Son of God. Paul is making the same point here that Luke made in his genealogy.

Luke 3:23 (ESV) — Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (**as was supposed**) of Joseph, the son of Heli.

And Paul makes that same point in another of his letters.

Galatians 4:4 (ESV) — But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, **born of woman**, born under the law,

What we are seeing here in verse 3, and in Luke 3, and in Galatians 4 is the virgin birth of Christ.

And how important is the virgin birth of Christ? Well, absent the virgin birth of Christ, Jesus is not the Son of God. That's how important the virgin birth is.

The virgin birth of Jesus is central to the deity of Jesus. In fact, they are effectively one and the same doctrine. Anyone who rejects the virgin birth of Christ must also reject the divinity of Christ.

But let's now ask our second question: **why did Paul remind us about all of that here?** Why was the Davidic covenant so important that Paul would refer to it in his opening salutation to the church in Rome?

Here is where we begin our search in earnest for the grand theme of Romans! Is there a theme that ties the whole book together and that explains everything we see in this book and the order in which we see all of it? Is there a theme that answers our question here: why does Paul explain this connection between Jesus and King David in his opening salutation?

Let me propose a theme that might do just that. It was a theme we looked at in our introduction — it is the theme of unity in the church, and especially the prophesied unity between Jew and Gentile in the one church.

Christ reigning on the throne of David is something that ties together the Jews and the Gentiles. Why? **Because the throne is Jewish, but the reign is universal.** Jesus is King over both Jew and Gentile, but the Jews through King David played a special role in how God made that come to pass. In a sense, this single verse is a preview of three entire chapters that we will see later in Romans 9, 10, and 11.

And how did this fact about Jesus help create and maintain unity between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians in Rome? By reminding the **Jews** that the gospel is for both Jew and Gentile, and by reminding the **Gentiles** that they must not look down on those Jews who were still living according to their Jewish traditions.

We will see both of those themes developed in much greater detail later in this book, but I think we already see a preview of them right here in verse 3. And that, I believe, is one reason why Paul is telling us about King David in his opening salutation.

But I think there is another reason as well — and we find that reason in the next verse, which parallels verse 3 in several important ways.

Romans 1:4

Romans 1:4 — 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,

In our study of Romans, we are going to come across some very difficult verses that require extra time for us to address all of the questions that we will have about those verses. Verse 4 is an example of such a verse. Verse 4 might look very straightforward on the surface, but it is not. There are some big difficulties lurking in this verse.

To begin, let's start with some questions about verse 4 that we will need to answer before we can move on to verse 5:

- What is meant by the word “declared”? Is verse 4 just telling us something that was **said** about Jesus? Is “declared” a good translation of the underlying Greek word? How is that same Greek word translated elsewhere in the Bible? (The left side of the Handout for Lesson 9 will help us with these questions.)
- To what does the phrase “in power” refer? Was the declaration made **in power**, or is Jesus the Son of God **in power**? (The right side of the Handout for Lesson 9 will help us with these questions.)
- Who or what is the “Spirit of holiness”? Is the Spirit of holiness the Holy Spirit? Is there a relation between “according to the spirit” in verse 4 and “according to the flesh” in verse 3?

To tackle this difficult verse 4, let's break it up into four phrases.

Phrase #1: “And was Declared to be the Son of God in Power”

What does that word “declared” mean in verse 4?

Rather than ask what the *English* word “declared” means, I think we should instead ask what the underlying *Greek* word means. Is “declared” a good translation? It is certainly a *popular* translation, but is it the *correct* translation? And, if not, why is it so popular?

The Greek word translated “declared” is *horizo*. That Greek word becomes the English word “horizon” if we add a single letter to the end, and that fact gives us a clue about the meaning of the Greek word. The English word “horizon” describes a limit or a boundary, and the Greek word “*horizo*” likewise literally means to mark out or to bound — not just something you say, but something you do. The Greek word can mean to appoint, to decree, to specify, to declare, to determine, or to limit.

And, yes, the word “declare” is on that list, but it is **not** the type of declaration that involves only **saying** something; instead it is the type of declaration that involves **doing** something.

Here is an example of the difference. When two countries go to war with each other, that war usually begins with a declaration of war. In that case, the word “declaration” is much more than just a statement that the two nations are at war, such as you might hear on the nightly news. Instead, that declaration of war includes the action of engaging in that war. The declaration includes both the statement and the actions that are done to make that statement true.

We see something similar here in verse 4. This declaration about Jesus in verse 4 is **not** just something God is **saying**, but instead it is also something God is **doing**.

We can see that by looking up the Greek word in a dictionary, but we can also see that by looking at how that same Greek word is used elsewhere in the Bible.

As shown by the yellow highlights on the Handout for Lesson 9, the Greek word “horizo” from Romans 1:4 is found in seven other verses — and in none of those other verses is that Greek word translated “declared.” Three times it is translated “determined,” three times it is translated “appointed,” and the final time we find it in the “definite” plan of God.

- **Luke 22:22** — For the Son of Man goes as it has been **determined**, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!
- **Acts 2:23** — This Jesus, delivered up according to the **definite** plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.
- **Acts 10:42** — And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one **appointed** by God to be judge of the living and the dead.
- **Acts 11:29** — So the disciples **determined**, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.
- **Acts 17:26** — And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having **determined** allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.
- **Acts 17:31** — 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.

- **Hebrews 4:7** — Again he **appoints** a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”

Now let’s go back to our question about the English word and the Greek word. Is “declared” a good translation? I don’t think it is.

The English word “declared” is ambiguous — it can mean just to say something (as in a declaration that it is raining outside), but it can also mean to make something happen by saying something (as in a declaration of war).

But the corresponding Greek word is not ambiguous — it always means the latter — not just to say something, but to determine or to appoint something — to mark out something or to set a bound, like the horizon.

And so I think we should look for a better translation than the one we find in the ESV. But, first, let’s ask this question: why does the ESV use that translation? And the ESV is hardly alone in that choice — we also find that same translation in the ASV and the KJV. Why? Why does the ESV choose “declared” here but “determined” or “appointed” or “definite plan” everywhere else?

That question is easy to answer. Those translations chose the word “declared” to avoid having this verse suggest that Jesus did not become the Son of God until after his resurrection.

That false view has a name: it is called Adoptionism. That heresy says that Jesus was born only as an ordinary human, but that God later *adopted* Jesus as his Son. That view is completely false! Countless verses tell us that view is false. John 1:1 tells us that “the Word was God,” and John 1:14 tells us that “the Word became flesh.” Jesus is the great I AM! (John 8:58)

And so, yes, we must reject the false doctrine of Adoptionism, but I think we should also reject a poor translation of the Bible even if that poor translation has the good intention of steering people away from that false doctrine of Adoptionism.

And I think that is what we see here — a poor translation (“declared”) intended to avoid a false view that *could* arise from the correct translation (“determined” or “appointed”). I think the much better approach is to use a correct and consistent translation and then see if we can understand the correctly translated verse in accord with the rest of the Bible. And here we can do just that.

But, if we translate the word “declared” as “determined” or “appointed,” then isn’t this verse saying that Jesus was determined or appointed to be Son of God at his resurrection? And the answer is no. That is not what the verse is saying at all.

First, there is no way to understand verse 4 as saying that Jesus did not become the Son of God until his resurrection. Why not? Because of verse 3. That verse begins with the phrase, “concerning his **Son**.” What that means is that verse 4 is telling us that **the Son** “was declared to be **the Son** of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness.” Verses 3 and 4 together say that **the Son was declared to be the Son**. And so, whatever verse 4 is telling us, it cannot be telling

us that Jesus became the Son in verse 4 because verse 3 confirms that Jesus was already the Son.

And second, we need to look at what verse 4 is telling us about Jesus. That verse does not say that Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God.” If we stop there, then we have left out part of that verse. Instead, verse 4 is saying that Jesus was declared or determined or appointed to be the Son of God **in power**. That phrase “in power” is crucial, and it is the explanation for our difficulty with using “determined” or “appointed” in place of “declared.”

And, yes, to answer an earlier question, I think that the phrase “in power” refers to Jesus being the Son of God **in power** rather than to the declaration being made **in power**. I think that is how we can understand this verse in a way that makes perfect sense with the rest of the Bible. In fact, I think this verse is just telling us something that we see elsewhere many times in the Bible.

But before we look at those other verses, let’s deal with a potential objection. How can we say that Jesus **became** the Son of God in power if Jesus never changes. How does someone who never changes ever become anything?

Hebrews 13:8 — Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

On the surface that verse seems like a problem, but not when we look at the context of that verse. When we do that, what we find is that Hebrews 13:8 is telling us that we can have confidence in Christ (Hebrews 13:6) because we know that his character and his divinity will never change. And Hebrews 13:8 is telling us that we can likewise

trust in the promises of Christ and in the word of Christ (Hebrews 13:5) for the same reason.

And, as for the idea that nothing about Christ ever changes, that is not what we find in the Bible. Instead, what we find in the Bible is that, although equal with God, Jesus “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6-7). That is a change — not in the character of Christ or the divinity of Christ, but it is a change.

But a change in what? The character of Christ never changes and the divinity of Christ never changes, but in the Bible we do see a change in the BLANK of Christ. What word should we use to fill in that BLANK?

I think the only way to answer that question is to choose a word from the Bible, and I think we have at least two candidates: the “form” of Christ and the “likeness” of Christ. We have a verse for each of those words.

Philippians 2:7 (ESV) — But made himself nothing, taking the **form** of a servant, being born in the **likeness** of men.

Romans 8:3 (ESV) — 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.

Whatever word we choose, likeness or form (or perhaps we simply choose both words), the conclusion is the same. There was a change when Jesus gave up equality with God and was born in the likeness of men. We can read all about that change in Philippians 2.

And there was also a change when Jesus was raised from the dead and was highly exalted by God the Father. We can also read all about that change in Philippians 2 — and elsewhere in the Bible.

Look at the green highlighted verses on the Handout for Lesson 9, and think about what is being done, who is doing it, and to whom it is being done.

John 17:4-5 — I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, **Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.**

Acts 2:36 — Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that **God has made him both Lord and Christ,** this Jesus whom you crucified.

Ephesians 1:19-23 — ...According to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Psalms 2:6-9 — As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” (and see Acts 13:33)

Philippians 2:9 — Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

I think that final verse answers our question. It is all laid out for us in Philippians 2. First, Jesus was equal with God the Father. Second, Jesus emptied himself and took the form of a servant. Third, God highly exalted Jesus so that at his name every knee should bow.

I think Romans 1:4 is focused on that third event — when God highly exalted Christ Jesus. I think that is what is being declared, determined, or appointed here in Romans 1:4 — not that Jesus is the Son of God, but that Jesus is the Son of God **in power!**

And, yes, that is not just something the Father **said** — that is something the Father **did**. Look at the green highlights on the Handout for Lesson 9 again — those verses are describing something God the Father did for God the Son. “God has highly exalted him.” “I have set my King on Zion.” God has “seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.”

And *when* did that happen? Doesn’t Daniel answer that question? Don’t we see that great event described in Daniel 7?

Daniel 7:13-14 — I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. **And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom**, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

That prophecy in Daniel 7 is describing the ascension of Christ. In Acts 1:9, Jesus ascended to Heaven through a cloud, and in Daniel 7:13, Jesus comes to God the Father with the clouds of heaven.

Acts 1 describes the ascension from the viewpoint of earth. Daniel 7 describes the ascension from the viewpoint of Heaven. And what happened?

- **Daniel 7** says: “And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom.”
- **Philippians 2** says: “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.”
- In **John 17**, Jesus says: “Father, glorify me **in your own presence** with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”
- **Acts 2** says: “God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”
- **Ephesians 2** says: God “raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places” and “he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.”
- **Psalms 2** says: “I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” And, “I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.”
- **Psalms 118** says that Jesus “has become the cornerstone.”

- And **Romans 1:4** says that Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God **in power** according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.”

I think those verses are all describing the same great event — the return of Christ to the presence of God the Father after his resurrection from the dead and just before the establishment of his eternal kingdom.

And as for understanding what it means that Jesus is the Son of God “**in power**,” all we need to do is look at the description of the risen Christ that we find in Revelation 19.

Revelation 19:11-16 (ESV) — Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

There is only one word for that description of Christ — “power!” And that is the word we find here in verse 4 — “power!” Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God **in power** according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.”

And we even sing about it! “All hail the **power** of Jesus’ name! Let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all. Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all!”

Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God in **power**!”

Phrase #2: “According to the Spirit of Holiness”

Who or what is the Spirit of holiness? Is the Spirit of holiness the Holy Spirit? How, if at all, is this Spirit of holiness in verse 4 related to the flesh in verse 3?

As for whether this “Spirit” is the “Holy Spirit,” the ESV translators certainly thought so, which is why the word “spirit” in verse 4 begins with a capital “S” in the ESV translation. (And, yes, the original Greek manuscripts had upper case letters, but that was all they had. Greek lower case letters came along much later.)

And I think we can agree that “Holy Spirit” is not too far removed linguistically from “Spirit of Holiness,” although that second phrase is used only here in the Bible. But what does the context tell us? Is Paul talking about the Holy Spirit in verse 4?

If “declared” in verse 4 just meant “said,” then perhaps the verse would just be saying that the Holy Spirit made this declaration, perhaps making it in power.

But, as we just saw, that word “declared” in verse 4 points to something that was done rather than just to something that was said. And when we looked at what was done, the Bible tells us it was done by God the Father: “God has highly exalted him.” And Paul will later tell us in this letter that it was God the Father and not the Holy Spirit who

raised Jesus from the dead: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you...” (Romans 8:11).

Perhaps the best way to approach this question about verse 4 is to look at verse 4 alongside verse 3 — and note the parallel structure.

“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...”

There is an unmistakable parallelism in those two verses. In verse 3, something about Christ is “**according to the flesh**,” and in verse 4, something about Christ is “**according to the Spirit of holiness**.” And what are those two somethings? In verse 3, it is that Jesus is the **Son** of David, and, in verse 4, it is that Jesus is the **Son** of God. The Son of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God according to the Spirit.

And perhaps that is the simplest way to understand this use of the word “flesh” in verse 3 and the word “spirit” in verse 4. Jesus is the Son of David according to the flesh and the Son of God according to the spirit. If that is what Paul is saying here, then perhaps this “Spirit of holiness” in verse 4 is not the Holy Spirit, but rather is the flesh and spirit of Christ, just as later in this letter we will find Paul discussing the flesh and spirit of others.

And we do see such a contrast between the flesh of Christ and the spirit of Christ elsewhere in the Bible.

1 Peter 3:18 (ESV) — For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might

bring us to God, being **put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.**

Also, Paul will talk about the Spirit of Christ in Romans 8:9, so maybe this Spirit of holiness is the Spirit of Christ and not the Holy Spirit.

Maybe, but maybe not. After all, let's remember what we said about verse 3 — that language “in the flesh” was a reminder that Jesus is not just the Son of Man, but he is also the Son of God. And that is precisely what we see here in verse 4 — Jesus is the Son of God.

And why does that suggest that this Spirit of holiness may, in fact, be the Holy Spirit? Because of what Matthew tells us about the birth of Christ.

Matthew 1:18 — Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child **from the Holy Spirit.**

That verse explains how Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Son of God — it is because Mary “was found to be with child,” not with child from Joseph but “with child from the Holy Spirit.”

And then here in Romans 1:3-4 what do we see? We see Jesus as the Son of David “according to the flesh,” and we see Jesus as the Son of God “according to the Spirit of holiness.”

So is the Spirit of holiness in verse 4 the Holy Spirit or not? I think we can jump either way. I think this Spirit could be the Spirit of Christ or could be the Holy Spirit. I'm not sure we can say for sure.

And my opinion? I lean toward the spirit of holiness being the Holy Spirit. I think “according to the flesh” and “according to the Spirit of holiness” are most likely describing the virgin birth of Christ by which Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Son of God.

Phrase #3: “By His Resurrection From the Dead”

Let’s focus now on the next phrase in verse 4: “And was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness **by his resurrection from the dead.**”

As we have already seen, the resurrection of Christ helps us with the timing of this verse. What God declared, determined, or appointed at the beginning of verse 4 was declared, determined, or appointed by what God did at the end of verse 4 — God raised Jesus from the dead.

And that fact fits well with all the verses we just read showing how Jesus was highly exalted by God at and after his resurrection. But there is a lot more to the word “resurrection” in verse 4 than just timing!

First, we should note that it is not surprising at all that Paul mentions the resurrection of Christ in his salutation to the church in Rome. If there is any surprise, it is that it took Paul four verses to reach that subject! Paul’s entire life had changed because he saw the resurrected Christ, and it seems that afterward Paul proclaimed the resurrection of Christ to everyone he met.

How do we know that Paul always talked about the resurrection? Well, for starters, we can read what Paul wrote and said — but we can also look for a big clue in Acts 17 from what someone else said to Paul.

Acts 17:18 — Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babblers wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of **foreign divinities**” — because he was preaching Jesus and the **resurrection**.

The Greek word for “resurrection” is *anastasis*. And how often did Paul talk about *anastasis*? Well, in Acts 17, Paul talked so much about Jesus and *anastasis* that the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers thought Paul was talking about “foreign divinities” (plural)! They thought *anastasis* was the name of one of Paul’s foreign gods! Paul must have mentioned the resurrection to them many, many times!

And Paul likewise has a great deal to say to the Romans about the resurrection. In fact, Paul will point the Roman Christians to the resurrection of Christ at least 10 more times in this letter (4:24-25; 6:4-9; 7:4; 8:11; 8:34; 10:9).

I think we can conclude from all of this that Paul knew something about the resurrection of Christ that many of us in the church today do not know: **the resurrection of the Christ is the very best evidence we have that the gospel of Christ is true**. And so if we want to persuade people to obey the gospel, perhaps we should talk about the resurrection as much as Paul did.

And the opposite is also true: if someone wants to completely demolish Christianity, then all that person must do is show that Jesus was not raised from the dead. If they can just dig up his bones, then Christianity will be no more.

And that’s not just me saying that — that is also Paul saying that.

1 Corinthians 15:17-19 — And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

There is no other religion in the world that is entirely based on the truthfulness of a single historical claim that is open to investigation by all.

Jesus rose from the dead! If that claim is true, then Jesus is the Son of God. If that claim is false, then Jesus was just another false Messiah and Christianity is a terrible hoax.

Paul knew that. Do we know that? Do we know that the evidence for the resurrection of Christ is overwhelming? Do we know that it is those who **reject** the resurrection of Christ who are walking through life with their eyes closed lest they see all the evidence?

When it comes to convincing doubters, we should start with the resurrection. That is what Paul did, and that is what Jesus did with Thomas, the most famous doubter of all.