

Romans 1:1-7

“Opening Greetings”

“Paul, a bond-servant of Messiah Yeshua, called *as* 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 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, Yeshua the Messiah our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake, among whom you also are the called of Yeshua the Messiah; to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called *as* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.”

The Epistle to the Romans begins with the longest introduction among any of the Apostle Paul’s other letters.³ It is widely acknowledged among expositors, conservative and liberal alike, that the length of this introduction is most probably on account of the fact that Paul had never been to Rome, and he was largely unacquainted with the Roman Believers. Paul’s letter to the Romans, due to his intention to visit these people (Romans 1:13-15), is widely a message of self-promotion. A major component of this epistle was Paul informing the Roman Believers not only what the good news of salvation in Israel’s Messiah meant to him, but specifically how Paul would present it to mixed groups of people out in the Mediterranean, to both Jews and those of the nations at large (Romans 1:16). In surveying the Epistle to the Romans, it is quite easy to detect how some of the statements made and terms employed in Romans 1:1-7, are elaborated on more fully in the body of the letter.

While themes of Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in the Body of Messiah, and their required unity and mutual respect of each other, dominate a great deal of Messianic reading of Romans—what does Romans communicate about the nature of the Messiah? How does the Jewish Believer, Saul of Tarsus—more commonly called the Apostle Paul—approach the relationship of Yeshua of Nazareth to the One God of Israel in Romans?

Paul, as the author of this letter, identifies himself to the Romans as *doulos Christou Iēsou* (δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ), a “slave/servant of Christ Jesus” (Romans 1:1). It can be argued, even a bit passively, that Paul calling himself a slave was a way to identify with a huge population segment of the ancient Roman Empire, those who were owned by others in some form of slavery. Yet, far more probably, given how *doulos* (δούλος) or “servant” widely translates the Hebrew *eved* (עֶבֶד) in the Septuagint, is how Paul’s calling himself a servant is to deliberately identify with previous servants such as Moses (Joshua 14:7), Joshua (Joshua 24:29), David (1 Chronicles 17:23; Psalm 89:3), the Prophets, etc. Douglas J. Moo, noting the Tanach’s usage of *eved-ADONAI* (עֶבֶד־יְהוָה), makes the important point of how, “Indicative of Paul’s high Christology is the fact that he replaces the ‘Lord’ of the OT with ‘Christ Jesus.’”⁴ Just as various important figures of the Tanach were considered to be servants of “the LORD” (YHWH), so is Paul, who identifies the Messiah Yeshua who He serves as being God.

Paul’s ministry calling and separation as an apostle is *eis euangelion Theou* (εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ), “for the Good News of God” (Romans 1:1, CJB/CJSB). While it is rightly recognized by about all who read Paul’s letter to the Romans, that his declaration of the gospel would see Jewish and non-Jewish people repent of their sins and receive eternal life in the Son of God, commentators have been more keen to draw the attention of readers to the significant Tanach

³ This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *Romans for the Practical Messianic*.

⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 41.

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background in view. It is not just enough that Paul's audience come to individual salvation and a redemption of their sins; they are also a part of the restoration of God's Kingdom, prophesied centuries earlier. F.F. Bruce describes,

"The Old Testament background of the New Testament use of *euangelion* is found in the LXX of Isaiah 40-66 (especially Is. 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1), where this noun or its cognate verb *euangelizomai* is used of the proclamation of Zion's impending release from exile. The New Testament writers treat this proclamation as foreshadowing the proclamation of release from spiritual estrangement and bondage procured by the death and resurrection of Christ."⁵

The theme of Israel's restoration, and its association with the arrival of the Messiah onto the scene of history, is picked up by Paul in much further detail in his discussions of Romans chs. 9-11.

Not only is it important to recognize how the gospel, or good news, is rooted within the restoration message of Israel's Kingdom—the first installment of which has occurred via the arrival of Yeshua—but also how this message was widely subversive to some of the alternative messages of "good news," which would have been present in the Roman Empire. C.E.B. Cranfield offers a summary of both the Tanach background of "good news," paralleling it with how the same terminology was also used in association with venerating the Roman Emperor:

"For the right understanding of εὐαγγέλιον [*euangelion*] here and elsewhere in the NT the use of the root *bśr* [בִּשְׂרָ] in the OT is of fundamental importance. The noun *bśōrāh*/*bśōrāh* [בִּשְׂרָה] occurs only six times (twice meaning 'reward for bringing good news'); but the verb in the Piel occurs often (it is nearly always represented in the LXX by the middle of εὐαγγελίζεω [*euangelizein*]) and means 'to announce good news' (e.g. 1 Kgs 1.42; Jer 20.15), especially of victory (e.g. 1 Sam 31.9). Of special importance are the occurrences in Ps 40.9 [MT: 10; LXX: 39.10]; 96 [LXX 95].2; Isa 40.9; 41.27; 52.7; 60.6; 61.1; Nah 1.15 [MT, LXX: 2.1]: they have to do with the in-breaking of God's reign, the advent of His salvation, vengeance, vindication. But there is also a pagan background to the NT use of εὐαγγέλιον. For the inhabitants of the Roman Empire it had special associations with the Emperor-cult, since the announcement of such events as the birth of an heir to the Emperor, his coming-of-age, and his accession, were referred to as εὐαγγέλια [*euangelia*]. There is thus in the Christian use of the word an implicit contrast between that εὐαγγέλιον [*euangelion*] which may truly be termed εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ [*euangelion Theou*] (for this phrase compare 15.16; Mk 1.14; 2 Cor 11.7; 1 Th 2.2, 8, 9; 1 Pet 4.17...) and those other εὐαγγέλια [*euangelia*] which represent the pretentious claims of self-important men. The message of good news Paul has to proclaim is God's authoritative word."⁶

While there is no doubting that *if Yeshua is Lord—Caesar is not* was a component of the good news to First Century recipients, the good news is a message mainly rooted within the Tanach Scriptures.

Paul claims that the message he declares about Yeshua is one "which [God] promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures" (Romans 1:2), *en graphais hagiais* (ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις), or "in the *Tanakh*" (CJB/CJSB). This is similar to what he said earlier in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." The good news would be a message, which would obviously have to appeal to not only distinct prophecies, but also various theological and typological themes, present within the Tanach.

⁵ F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 68.

⁶ C.E.B. Cranfield, *International Critical Commentary: Romans 1-8* (London: T&T Clark, 1975), pp 54-55.

While it is frequently observed how far too many Christian people today acquire their theology about God, Jesus, and salvation history in general far too much from Paul's letters—at the expense of much of the rest of the Bible—never let it be said that the Apostle Paul had a low view of the Tanach Scriptures. Craig S. Keener is right to emphasize, “The good news Paul proclaims is just what the prophets announced (12; cf. 3:21; 16:26), hence Paul's heavy use of Scripture in this letter focused on his gospel.” He goes on to assert, “Roughly half of Paul's extant quotations of Scripture appear in this letter.”⁷ Whether alluded to directly, indirectly, or thematically—a number of Tanach passages to keep in mind, from the Book of Isaiah, significantly include:

“Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift *it* up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’” (Isaiah 40:9).

“How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, *and* says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isaiah 52:7).

“A multitude of camels will cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba will come; they will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the LORD” (Isaiah 60:6).

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners” (Isaiah 61:1).

The message of which Paul speaks involves, “the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 1:3-4, RSV). It has been thought by some that the content of Romans 1:3-4 might be from an early creed used by the ancient Believers,⁸ but it could just as well be a significant summation of who Yeshua was for Paul, as He expounded upon who He is from the Tanach Scriptures.

Certainly important to Yeshua's Messianic identity is *genomenou ek spermatis David kata sarka* (γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα), “born of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Romans 1:3, NKJV). This would involve the Messiah's Incarnation into the world of mortals, as a member of the Davidic line, and surround various Tanach promises or prophecies involving King David and/or his Messianic descendant (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 89; 132; Isaiah 11:1-5; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Ezekiel 34:23-24).

A number of English Bibles skew the intention of Romans 1:4, improperly having that Yeshua was “declared the Son of God” (NASU, also NRSV/ESV). This could imply that only at Yeshua's resurrection was He to then be considered to be the Son of God, and only then possess some kind of supernatural power. One of the main meanings of the verb *horizō* (ὀρίζω), as stated by BDAG, is “**to make a determination about an entity, determine, appoint, fix, set,**” and can specifically involve “of persons *appoint, designate, declare.*”⁹ Romans 1:4 more specifically says, though, *tou horizthentos huiou Theou en dunamei* (τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει), “having

⁷ Craig S. Keener, *New Covenant Commentary Series: Romans* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), pp 19, 20.

⁸ Colin G. Kruse, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), pp 47-49.

⁹ BDAG, 723.

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been designated Son of God in power” (Brown and Comfort).¹⁰ *Horizō* is better rendered in other versions as “designated” (RSV) or “appointed” (TLV), and is employed to describe Yeshua as “the One who has been appointed [*horizō*] by God as Judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42). “Demonstrated” (CJB/CJSB) would also be a better rendering for *horizō*.

James R. Edwards, noting some of the possible issues present in Romans 1:4, states that this “might suggest that Jesus *became* the Son of God at the resurrection, although he had not been so beforehand. That is scarcely Paul’s thought. At the resurrection Jesus was constituted Son of God *in power*, whereas before the resurrection he had been Son of God in suffering.”¹¹ One can see a likely connection between Romans 1:3-4 and the *Carmen Christi* hymn of Philippians 2:6-11, or perhaps even the sentiment of Hebrews 7:25. The main point of Romans 1:4 is not that there was a time when Yeshua was not the Son of God, but rather in His resurrection Yeshua was decisively “marked out” (Kingdom New Testament) to be the Son of God, as in His Incarnation He suffered and died for human sin. Moo rightly notes, “The transition [here]...is not a transition from a human messiah to a divine Son of God (adoptionism) but from the Son as Messiah to the Son as both Messiah *and* powerful, reigning Lord.”¹²

While Yeshua’s resurrection from the dead (Acts 17:31) is obviously to assure people of the future reality of the general resurrection of the dead—more to the point of the good news and restoration of Israel’s Kingdom, is how Yeshua’s identity as Savior is confirmed by His resurrection, given the fact that Israel’s Kingdom restoration is still largely futuristic. N.T. Wright makes some key points about this:

“A crucified Messiah was a failed Messiah; no first-century Jew would have needed theological exegesis of a particular text in order to make that point. The Messiah had a task: to rebuild or cleanse the Temple, to defeat the pagans, to rescue Israel and bring God’s justice to the world. Anyone who died without accomplishing these things, particularly one who attacked the Temple and died at the hands of the pagans he should have been defeating, leaving Israel unredeemed and the world unjust, was obviously not the true Messiah. This is why it took something utterly extraordinary to make anyone suppose that Jesus was in fact the Messiah. Paul is clear: It was the resurrection that marked Jesus out as ‘son of God’ (v. 4). The resurrection reversed that verdict that all thoughtful first-century Jews would have passed on Jesus at the time of his crucifixion. If such a Messiah could not be fitted in to existing conceptions of what Israel’s God was supposed to be doing, that was too bad. The existing conceptions would have to be rethought around him. That, indeed, was the intellectual dimension of Paul’s work.”¹³

The Messiah event—Yeshua’s death, burial, and resurrection—is to rightly be regarded as the most important event in human history. Not only has Yeshua’s sacrifice provided permanent atonement and forgiveness to those who seek it, but His resurrection from the dead and ascension to the Father have initiated the final stages of salvation history. We still await the culmination of this today, via His Second Coming, the resurrection of the righteous dead, and the complete restoration of Israel’s Kingdom.

Paul describes how “through [Yeshua] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake” (Romans 1:5). There is debate on how to approach the intended audience of Paul’s proclamation here, and what he specifically means by *en pasin tois ethnesin* (ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). The NASU, NIV, and NRSV

¹⁰ Brown and Comfort, 531.

¹¹ James R. Edwards, *New International Biblical Commentary: Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 30.

¹² Moo, *Romans*, 49.

¹³ N.T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans,” in Leander E. Keck, ed. et. al., *New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 10:418.

have “all the Gentiles,” whereas the KJV/NKJV, RSV/ESV, and HCSB have “all the nations.” The latter, with *ethnesin* rendered by the neutral “nations,” recognizes that not only does Paul have a distinct mission to reach out to non-Jewish people, but also his own Jewish people as well. Paul’s missional vocation to non-Jewish people (Romans 11:13) was not to the detriment of his own fellow Jews.

Not only does Paul state that he has a responsibility to declare the gospel or good news to all people in Romans 1:5, but to see the good news manifested in *hupakoēn pisteōs* (ὕπακοήν πίστεως), the “obedience of faith,” likely paralleled by Paul’s previous usage of *akoēs pisteōs* (ἀκοῆς πίστεως), or the “hearing of faith” in Galatians 3:2, 5 (KJV, American Standard Version). What is this “obedience of faith” intended to be? Some versions have gone a little beyond the literal “obedience of faith” for *hupakoēn pisteōs*, having “the obedience that comes from faith” (NIV), “trust-grounded obedience” (CJB/CJSB), “believing obedience” (Kingdom New Testament), or even “to promote obedience to the faith” (Moffat New Testament). A rather standard thought would be, as offered by Colin G. Kruse, how “obedience appears to be acceptance of the gospel call to believe in Christ, that is, the obedience that consists in faith.”¹⁴

None of us is going to deny how an expressed trust in Yeshua the Messiah is involved with the “obedience of faith.” Yet, the “obedience of faith” has to be much more than just having a saving faith in the gospel, given how later in describing the condition of sinners who come to saving faith (Romans chs. 7-8), obedience to God’s Instruction via His Spirit is implied to follow—not just some abstract belief that God has redeemed people from sin. Among commentators, Moo offers the rather unique view, suggesting that *hupakoēn pisteōs* is an exegetical genitive¹⁵ (case indicating possession), which for him would mean,

“This obedience to Christ as Lord is always closely related to faith, both as an initial, decisive step of faith and as a continuing ‘faith’ relationship with Christ. In light of this, we understand the words ‘obedience’ and ‘faith’ to be mutually interpreting: obedience always involves faith, and faith always involves obedience. They should not be equated, compartmentalized, or made into separate stages of Christian experience.”¹⁶

Edwards similarly says, “There is no separation in Paul’s mind between faith and obedience, between believing and doing,” and references James 2:14-26 and Matthew 7:15-20; 21:28-32 as some corroborating New Testament passages. Edwards even goes a step further, and quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who said, “only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes.”¹⁷

Wright takes “obedience of faith” in the important direction of not only recognizing that redeemed persons need to obey God, but makes a connection between this, and Paul’s desire to see those from the nations at large come to the sort of obedience required by the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4:

“What overtones should we hear in this dense phrase? ‘Obedience’ in Greek is ὑπακοή (*hupakoē*, a compound from the verb ἀκούω *akouō*, ‘hear’). Regularly in the LXX it translates שמע (*šāma*), which carries not only the meaning ‘hear and obey,’ but also the connection, emphasized in the regular Jewish daily prayer, of personal covenant [responsibilities]: ‘Hear, O Israel, YHWH our God, YHWH is one; and you shall love YHWH your God’ (Deut 6:4-5). To

¹⁴ Kruse, *Romans*, 51.

¹⁵ Moo, *Romans*, 52 fn#70.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *The Cost of Discipleship*, revised edition, trans. R.H. Fuller (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 69.

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bring the nations into 'obedience' would therefore mean to bring them into the family of this one God"¹⁸ (cf. 3:29-30).

While one might be tempted here to think that the nations in view of Romans 1:5 are only the pagans at large, we need not overlook the fact that many Jewish people themselves had strayed from obedience to God, as the tenor of Romans ch. 2 makes clear. Even with the pagan Greeks and Romans needing to acknowledge Israel's God as the Creator, and Israel's Messiah as the Redeemer—so did many Jews need to be restored to complete fellowship, and disobedience for them would especially involve rejection of the good news of their promised Messiah. **The "obedience of faith" involves the total ramifications of the gospel message**—which for pagans would obviously have more aspects to it, as they would have to first acknowledge Israel's God, appreciate on some level Israel's Scriptures, and then see Yeshua for who He was as Redeemer of humanity. We need not try to limit "the nations" or the "obedience of faith" of Romans 1:5 to any one group of ancient people.

As Paul's opening greeting to the Romans closes, he issues "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah" (Romans 1:7b), with *charis humin kai eirēnē* (χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη) combining traditional Greek and Jewish greetings. Normal Greek letters tended to only include the salutation *chairein* (χαίρειν) or "greetings" (cf. 1 Maccabees 10:18), which Paul has replaced with the similar sounding *charis* or "grace." He has attached this with *eirēnē* (εἰρήνη) or "peace," the Septuagint equivalent of *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם). One also sees how Paul commonly uses specific terms for the Deity, referencing God as "Father" and Yeshua as "Lord." Paul's theology of the Godhead is carefully balanced, as the close relationship of both the Father and Son are recognized. The Father is mentioned first as God,¹⁹ but Yeshua is also recognized as a part of the Godhead as "Lord." By no means does Paul simply consider Yeshua to be a human master by calling Him *Kurios* (κύριος). The title *Kurios* was used in the Greek Septuagint to render the Divine Name YHWH (יהוה), and Paul absolutely considers Yeshua the Messiah to be the LORD manifested to the world in human flesh (cf. Romans 9:5; 10:9).²⁰

Romans 6:1-15

"Yeshua 'Lives to God'"

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Messiah Yeshua have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Messiah, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Messiah, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin,

¹⁸ Wright, in *NIB*, 10:420.

¹⁹ Cf. D. Guthrie and R.P. Martin, "God: God as Father (2.2)," in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 357.

As is noted in this article: "In the opening salutation in all the letters under Paul's name God is described as Father. It forms a basic assumption behind all that the apostle writes in these letters."

²⁰ Cf. L.W. Hurtado, "Lord: Appellation Formulas (3.3)," in *Ibid.*, 566.

As noted in this article: "[T]he single most frequently found use of *kyrios* [or 'Lord'] in Paul (about 100 times in the letters we are considering here) is as the designation of Jesus without any other title, simply 'the Lord.'"