

# Distinguished Ancestry

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] I want to welcome you here. Let's open in prayer. I'll ask Rob Bentall, wherever he is, please open us in prayer. Cover the meal and cover the talk, and you have 15 seconds.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this day that you have given us. Thank you for the gift of food, but especially the gift of your son, and the opportunity to gather like this and be away for a few moments' time and to be drawn closer to you.

So we commit the time to you and ask your blessing in Jesus' name. Amen. I want to welcome those who are new and delighted to have you here. Every couple weeks we'll have you say hello or stand up or indicate who you are, but once in a while we want to just welcome you and we're glad you're here.

Some people have asked us because we never advertise what the lunches are worth. We ballpark it and the lunch is worth around \$3. because her makes the sandwiches and the soup is bought. So there's the range if you want to know. And last year we just put a little card out, January through June, that said donations only. And at the end of the year, never mentioning anything, we had made \$90 in five months.

[ 1 : 14 ] So some of you are generous and some of you need lunch, whatever. It seems to work out quite fine. Tomorrow is lunch at Caesars. Is that right? Herb? It's 12 o'clock, so 1-15.

Dr. Edward Huey from the Dr. Hospital in Lakewood, California is a speaker. He's a person from the region. He's got a great story. Great.

If you want to attend, would you see me after? Just let Herb know and he'll call in the numbers, but it'd be good to have you there. It happens once a month. One thing I received today that I thought I'd just call DocTalk.

It's put out once a quarter by Volvo, Doc Stetter Volvo. And I want to read you a story that was mailed to me. And I want to see how fast you are.

I don't know if you pick up about this story. It's called Romantic Weekend in Seattle. This is mailed to all the Volvo people over B.C. A Romantic Weekend in Seattle was almost ruined when one of our Volvo customers couldn't get his car into gear.

[ 2 : 21 ] The hotel was booked, the sitter hired, the anticipation was running high, but the car refused to be driven. After so much planning, these two Romantics were not to be denied the weekend by an unfaithful Volvo.

Borrowing a neighbor's Toyota, parentheses, really, they set off to meet their destiny in Seattle. On Monday, the Volvo was towed to the dealership, and the investigation into its reluctance to perform began.

Under the discerning eye of our vacuum-trained master technician, the answer to the problem came quickly. The floor mats had been incorrectly returned to their place following a vacuum and cleaning.

By reversing the mats, the clutch was prevented from being engaged, and the car couldn't be put into gear. By design, these mats are thinner where they fit beneath the clutch.

The culprits turned out to be our customers' well-intentioned children. They had washed and claimed the car as their contribution to their parents' Seattle getaway. There we have it, positive proof that love is indeed a life-driving force, even in circumstances where clutches refuse to be engaged.

[ 3 : 25 ] That was our car, two weeks ago. Yeah, and the towing was covered, and I went down to see what was wrong, and the guy just holds up the mat, you know, and they all broke into whatever, so.

Anyway, I hope that encourages you. Great, but I left my name off this, so you're the only people in town that really know the truth. So, great. Chris is going to read the scriptures, Grauer, and then Harry.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets and the holy scriptures, 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, through whom we have received grace and apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith for his sake, for the sake of his name among all the nations, including yourselves, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

The reason I'm an Anglican is I was born that way, and I never changed, but I, when I got into the church and started preaching in Anglican churches, you may know that during sermon time, response is not called for, and so it was a great surprise to me when I first went to a church where people like to respond during the sermon, and you discover that, there are certain key phrases that inevitably will get you a response, you know.

Like, all you've got to say is, you must be born again. And you get a response. Yeah, that's what you've got to say. And so, it was good to experience that.

[ 5 : 33 ] It was sort of like a fishing game. You'd put bait out and see what people would respond to. But I tell you that because when Paul begins this letter to the Romans, he's writing to a congregation that's already established, that he hadn't established, and he has to win their approval very fast.

So he says the things that he knows will get them saying, Amen, this man knows what he's talking about. We'll read the rest of this letter. And that's the part we come to today, as I'm told.

When you come to that place where it says, 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.

We've done, this is the third in this series of three, on the first six verses of, the first six verses of Romans chapter one. And I talked first about Paul being set apart for the gospel, that he was a Pharisee who had been set apart for the law, and now God has interrupted in his life, and set him apart for the gospel.

Remember that he belonged to a very much respected religious group, the Jews, who were influential throughout the Mediterranean world.

[ 7 : 01 ] He lived when, and this being set apart for the gospel, was in the midst of a society that was replete with Greek and Latin gods, and all sorts of mystery religions.

He was in the midst of a pluralism that makes our pluralism look relatively insignificant. And he belonged to a tiny group within that group.

So that he was, when he was set apart for the gospel, he was picking one reality with which he had been confronted in the face of a million different kinds and forms of religion, and religious establishment, and religious pressures of one kind and another.

So if you think that you're in a minority as a Christian in our society, Paul was in a far greater minority. And what one person has said that I found very helpful is that most human religion is organized rebellion against the God who is.

That's not what you call an ecumenical statement. But I think it's the reality of the New Testament that you have to come to terms with.

[ 8 : 23 ] And Paul recognized that. That what we require in our society, in our pluralistic cultural mosaic, is what Peter Berger calls religion devoid of any inherent meaning.

That's what's required. That's the religion that sells in our society. And I tell you that because I think it is profoundly embarrassing for me, as a very religious man, as I'm understood in our society, to confront the terrible and specific reality of the gospel of the New Testament, which is very unaccommodating.

It's very uncompromising. It is indeed what the New Testament calls it. It's a stone that is delivered to the building site, but it doesn't fit.

It may weigh three tons, but in terms of the construction of the building, there's no way you can fit it in. And there it lies, discarded, because you can't fit it in.

And that's the nature of this gospel. And when Paul talks about the gospel, he says that what the gospel concerns is the son of David, according to the flesh, the son of God, according to the Holy

Spirit.

[ 9 : 59 ] So what Paul is saying about... There it is. What Paul is saying about Jesus is that he is defined, in a sense, in two different ways.

In this sphere over here, as it's called, he is the son of David, if you want. That's where he is historically.

You can fit him into, in a sense, into time and space, define his humanity, define his ancestry, define his origin, define who he is within the scope of history.

And then, you have another sphere, in which he is, he is the Lord of glory, as the one who has risen from the dead.

So that, he is these two people, in these two different spheres. He is both of them. He's not one or the other. He is both. So, and one of the attempts that's consistently been made in history is to try and separate the two.

[ 11 : 12 ] The man of history and the man of faith. That what they call the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. And most religions can accommodate Jesus Christ if they can successfully make that distinction.

I was very much intrigued read by Chuck Colson's book on kingdoms in conflict where he says that when he describes his own religious experience, he talks about, I have accepted Jesus Christ. And he says, the media always write it up as Colson's professed religious experience. because they don't want to get on to the topic of Jesus Christ.

And he said, one editor even will not put the two words Jesus and Christ together because he thinks that's making an editorial comment which is uncalled for.

And so, you see, the great embarrassment, the thing that doesn't fit into the world of religion is the person of Jesus Christ. If you look at him in terms of the world, he is the son of David.

[ 12 : 20 ] If you look at him in terms of God, he is the son of God through the Holy Spirit designated by his resurrection from the dead.

Well, that's the problem that we have and I think it's the problem that all of us have in facing Christianity. The New Testament is hopeless in terms of any sense of due proportion in terms of contemporary ecumenical thought because it makes these kinds of statements.

Listen to this. This is how Jesus is described in the book of Colossians. What an embarrassment to find religious people like us who want religion devoid of meaning.

It says of Jesus, he is the image of the invisible God. He is the firstborn of all creation. In him, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities.

All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things. In him, all things hold together. He's the head of the body, the church.

[ 13 : 39 ] He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

There you have this tremendous statement of the one who is, the one in whom all things exist and through whom all things hold together, the one who died on the cross.

All that is put before us and in a sense if you want to know Jesus Christ, that's the only Jesus Christ there is to know. The one who is spoken of in those terms.

We try desperately to fit him into our world, to fit him into our pattern of religious consciousness, to fit him into our moral and ethical engines that make our society work and he simply doesn't fit.

He doesn't fit because if you read in Hebrews, in many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets. In these last days he's spoken to us by a son whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

[ 14 : 58 ] He, that is, Jesus Christ, reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

So this tremendous exaltation of this man who belongs to history, this son of David, and the exaltation that takes place of him.

Well, when Leslie Newbigin has written this interesting book and he said in it that in the world, in the contemporary world of different religions which are, you know, which we categorize as being

different ways of approaching the same God, he says, the possibility that Christianity is based on is that it might actually be the case that the one who created and sustains the entire universe of created beings has personally made himself known at a certain time and place in universal history. That's at the heart of the gospel. That's what Paul means when he says that this gospel was promised and that the gospel concerned Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of David according to the flesh, the Son of God according to the Spirit.

That's, that's at the heart of it. It's this man, Jesus Christ. Well, the difficulty is then, if I could illustrate this to you and this may, I'm going to get used to this after a while.

[16:58] there is our world and where man stands is in a sense in the center of our world.

That's, that's where humanity is, right there. And he is by his senses and by his experience and by his background and by his identity as a, as a mammal, all these things, they're part of his humanity. He is part of this world, part of the history of this world, part of the technology of this world, has this understanding is derived from this world. Everything comes from there. And then you come along to a man in this world and you tell him about another man, Jesus Christ.

And you say, now he is right outside this world. He is, while he has been part of this world, he is, he is the Lord of the universe.

He is the one that created this world. And he came into the world and made himself known. So when this man looks over at this and sees this, he says, that is insignificant and irrelevant to our world.

[18:14] The dynamic of our world is such that it cannot tolerate the possibility of somebody being outside. Now what happens to a person who gets converted is that they move from this position over to this position.

And they look at this world and they say about this world, it is irrelevant to the ultimate reality which is Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

And that's why some people wrote to, I think it was to Teilhard de Chardin and told them that they didn't trust Christian scientists because Christian scientists weren't really involved in the world.

They stood outside the world and looked at it. That's why Marxists, I think, despise Christianity because Christians stand outside the world in terms of their relationship to Jesus Christ.

these are your carrots, Herb, they're getting to me. That he stands outside the world and looks at it.

[19:26] He is not ultimately totally tied in to the destiny of this world. And this is why Christians are considered to be in a sense traitors to the ultimate human cause.

That they don't really identify with what our world is all about. And we get caught in that situation all the time because we say my world, my home is not down here, I'm just passing through.

This is a transitory kind of existence. This world and my involvement in it is not the ultimate reality of my life. And that's again, Colson points this out, that wherever there is tyrants of any kind, they inevitably say, we cannot tolerate Christians because of this objectivity that Christians have about the world in which they don't feel really tied into it.

They keep praying about a father who is in heaven, whose kingdom they want to come, and they're not really concerned about what's happening here and now.

Well, except that their faith is focused in the person who created this world for his own purposes.

And what you get when you have this picture of Jesus in Romans 1, 1 to 6, is you have Jesus, the son of David, so that he's very much a part of the world, but you also have Jesus, the son of God, according to the Holy Spirit, by the resurrection from the dead.

[21:12] Now, the way that I think works out in contemporary terms is that you get what I suppose is the most sophisticated form of opposition to Christianity right now, which is the New Age movement.

and the New Age movement, you know, sees man in all his potential, and he's prepared to maximize everything he is.

His physical strength, his intellectual ability, his emotional capacity, his intuitiveness, his artisticness, his technological achievements, all those things are to be maximized, and this is the New Age.

And there is no limit to what man can do if he will really give himself to the spirit of the New Age.

Well, the New Age is really, I think, a steal from the New Testament, because Paul is talking about the New Age here.

And he says that the New Age is not a matter primarily of maximizing the human potential. The New Age is a matter of overcoming death. And if you want to know what the New Age is, it's that which started when God raised Jesus from the dead and made new life available to people, a life which was no longer subject to death.

[ 22 : 43 ] That's what the New Age is. That's what it's meant to be. And this turns out to be a very poor substitute, because it doesn't deal with the fundamental problem, and that is death itself.

and the New Age as it begins with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the New Age which we enter into by putting our faith in Jesus Christ, is that age which begins with the victory over death. One commentator is careful to point out in this passage, and I would like you to see it, because it seems such a remarkable thing to have said, but look at the text where it says in verse 4, designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead.

Now, what this means then is that Jesus' resurrection from the dead is the beginning of something which is entirely new.

This maximizing the human potential appeals to the wealthy and to the elite and to the technologically advanced. It appeals to the top level of society.

[ 24 : 06 ] This you can take to the poorest in all our world and say there is a new age which belongs to you, and it's a new age which can be yours right now because it's through faith in Jesus Christ that you enter into that new age.

And it's by His resurrection from the dead that the new age was begun. Now, that's the competition that we're in.

That's the situation that we're trying to, in a sense, talk about in our world. We want to talk about the gospel. The gospel concerns Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is very much a part of our world and its problems, only He deals with them much more profoundly than anyone else can because He deals with the issue of life and death itself.

And that that's who Jesus is. And He is the only one who does this. And so, when we are called to faith in Jesus Christ, we are called to examine our culture in the light of the gospel rather than to do what we traditionally do, and that is examine our gospel in the light of our culture.

[ 25 : 31 ] We come along as sophisticated members of our advanced technological 20th century society and look at the gospel and spew it out on the ground as being worthless and irrelevant.

Until such time as you are converted by the grace of God, to begin to see that the worthless thing, the thing that has no ultimate value, is the world in which we live, because it is to be superseded by the kingdom, by the kingdom of God.

And that's why it says again in this passage that where Jesus is designated Son of God in power, that the Christ who came among us meek and lowly and subject to our humanity has been designated Son of God in power, in that all power is given unto him, and that he is to be the one whom God has appointed to judge the world.

The final authority belongs to him. And that when Paul says, this is what the gospel concerns, this is the one who is at the heart of the gospel, Jesus Christ, then what he's saying to us is that the ultimate meaning of your life is defined by your relationship to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, the Son of David, according to the flesh, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, according to the Holy Spirit, by his resurrection from the dead.

[ 27 : 21 ] Well, next week I want to go on and start into the book of Ecclesiastes, but I wanted to show you what I think to be the point of confrontation between the gospel of the New Testament, which concerns Jesus Christ, and our world, which can't fit Jesus Christ in.

Thank you very much for listening so patiently. Just one comment before you get up.

Next week we kick off our fall series, and we would encourage you we'll have a little larger lunch than usual if there's a number of sanitary to bring your friends if we're going to kick it off for eight weeks on Ecclesiastes.

He'll be doing most of them, but Michael Green's doing one, John Stott's going to be here for one. It'll be a whole eight week series, so I want to encourage you just to bring your friends and make it off.

Let's close in prayer, shall we? Father, we're grateful that these last three weeks we've encountered in Romans again the essence of the gospel is your son Christ.

