

Jesus – the Son of David

The New Testament opens with the statement that Jesus is the Son of David (Matthew 1:1) and many times during the gospels Jesus is addressed as David's son or descendant (see Matthew 9:27 ,12:23 ,15:22, 20:30 and 21:9). But it is not only the contemporaries of Jesus who so named him. The angel who came to tell Mary that she was chosen by God used that very designation as well:

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

Promises to David

By referring to David as "his father" or ancestor, Gabriel was indicating that promises made to David some 1000 years earlier had not been rescinded, but were still awaiting their fulfilment. This is what David was promised:

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, 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 a father to him and he will be a son to Me ... And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever (2 Samuel 7:12–16).

Gabriel was explaining to Mary, who was herself a descendant of King David, that, as Jesus would be her son, he would be the promised descendant who would occupy the throne of David – the throne David once had when he ruled from Jerusalem – and that he will reign, as David once did, over the house of Jacob (a term which refers to the nation of Israel).

Mary's Response

Some months later, while visiting her cousin Elizabeth, Mary was moved to make this magnificent expression of praise to God when she reflected upon the coming birth of Israel's Messiah – her Son Jesus:

He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed. He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever (Luke 1:51–55).

Notice that Mary understood that Israel was still God's servant despite all their unfaithfulness over the centuries. She also understood that God showed love to the seed of Abraham (a term which can refer to the Israelites – see Genesis 15:13) because of the faithfulness of Abraham himself.

Zacharias Speaks

Mary was not alone in this understanding, for her song of praise was

followed by a prophecy from Elizabeth's husband, Zacharias, in which he said:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant—as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old – salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days (Luke 1:67–75).

These words of Zacharias affirm the continuity of God's purpose – the promises made to David and to Abraham will be fulfilled in the Son of God. That message of salvation went out firstly to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 10:6, 15:24) who needed to repent, believe the gospel and be baptized.

John the Baptist's Cry

It was John the Baptist (son of Elizabeth and Zacharias) who taught the Jews so powerfully that fleshly descent from Abraham is no longer enough. He urged them to be baptized for the remission of sins and issued this warning:

You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham (Luke 3:7–8).

It is no longer birth that qualifies a person to be a member of God's people, John explained, but rebirth in the waters of baptism. That does not mean, however, that God has cast away his people Israel. They are, as the apostle Paul explains, "*beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:28–29).*"

Despite Israel's faithlessness in refusing to accept the Lord Jesus as their long-promised Messiah, God remains faithful to the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. And Jesus is still the Son of David as well as the Son of God.

King of Israel

When Jesus returns from heaven he is coming to be king of Israel as well as king over all the world. At that time both Jews and Gentiles will rejoice together in their Lord, who will, at last, fulfill what the aged Simeon said as he greeted baby Jesus. Mary and Joseph had brought Jesus to be circumcised and, in the Temple, they met two faithful people who were awaiting the coming of the Messiah.

Simeon was one of them and he was able to recognise that Jesus was the Son of David who will save both Israel and the nations from all their problems. This is what he said:

Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart In peace, according to Thy word; for my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel (Luke 2:29–32).

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Quotations from the NASB