

Romans: Caesar & Christ—Gospel Declared, Part 2

by David Orton

<http://lifemessenger.org/romans-caesar-christ-gospel-declared-part-2/>

EXPOSITION: Chapter 1:1-17

Purpose & Theme

1:1-7 — Paul's Salutation

1-2 "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures"—While possessing intimate elements, Paul's opening salutation (longer than any other Pauline epistle) is in the style of a formal imperial letter, carrying the weight of a mandate. This is significantly added to by the use of the word 'gospel' (*euangélion*), which, as indicated [previously](#), not only had roots in the OT (Septuagint [LXX] - in verb form, *to proclaim good news*: Isa 40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1) but also in the emperor cult. It was used for the proclamation of the advent of Caesar Augustus as the divine ruler and saviour of the world, of a new epoch of justice and peace. The Holy Spirit, who spoke by the prophets and the apostles, therefore plucked *euangélion* from the lexicon of the Greco-Roman milieu for a strategic purpose. The 'Gospel of God' is consequently proclaimed in antithesis to the false gospel of Caesar as a would-be God. Paul, in establishing his authority as a 'slave' (*doulos*) and 'apostle' (*apóstolos*) of Christ – in fact, an emissary – from the outset is declaring the ultimacy of Christ over Caesar, setting them off against each another. It was therefore Christianity that, from its beginning, injected into world history a force that placed limits on government and destroyed all statist aspirations to godhood. The *Gospel of God* is set forth as the antithesis of the *Gospel of Man*. It is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God – God's government – over the Kingdom of Man.

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God "was promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures"; thus, fulfilling Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the human colossus (Dan 2), representing all humanistic and statist pretensions to godhood. Human history is foretold, represented in four empires: 1) the head of gold, *Babylon*; 2) the chest and arms of silver, *Medo-Persia*; 3) the thighs of bronze, *Greece*; and 4) the legs of iron and the feet partly of iron and clay, *Rome*. A rock is carved out without human hands and cast upon the feet of the image, crushing the feet and bringing down the whole human colossus. The rock then grows and fills the whole earth. Daniel then declares its meaning:

And in the days of those kings [Rome] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,

Daniel 2:44

And so, "in the days of those kings" – that is, during the Roman Empire, in time-space history – God's kingdom will be established and demolish all human kingdoms. This therefore means that before Christ returns every pretension to godhood of the humanistic state will be brought down by the rock that was not carved by human hands. A supernatural fifth empire will fill the earth and replace all humanistic tyrannies with God's rule. In the days of the Roman Empire, in fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy, John declared that the Kingdom of God had already overthrown the kingdoms of men:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

Revelation 11:15

Ascending from Golgotha's battlefield, Christ is enthroned as the victorious King. With every enemy definitively defeated, history is now the unfolding story of his rule over them. In the ascension, David explains that, "The Lord [the Father] says to my Lord [Jesus]: 'Sit at my right hand, *until* I make your enemies your footstool'" (Psa 110:1; see NT citations & allusions: Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42, 43; Acts 2:34, 35; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20, 22; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 2:8; 8:1;

10:12-13; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). To this Peter agrees when he declares, "[Jesus] whom heaven must receive *until* the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21 NKJV). As a prophet, David declares that Jesus is seated in heaven *until* every enemy is consummatively defeated *in* history. This promise will be progressively fulfilled in the "restoration of all things". While Christ was installed as a victorious King in the ascension, his rule and his victories are progressively actualised in the affairs of men as it is extended to the universe. The nature of the Kingdom of God is one of gradualism and increase (Isa 9:7; Deut 7:22): "The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mk 4:28); "He told them another parable. 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, *till* it was all leavened'" (Matt 13:33). And so, Daniel's rock, carved without human hands, will gradually grow in human history *until* it fills the whole earth. God's foreordained purpose for the world is therefore advancing on schedule, despite apparent momentary setbacks (from man's perspective), until the restoration of the earth to its paradisiacal state. All the promises of the prophets of a glorious kingdom epoch will come to pass before Christ returns. For all that was lost in Adam – and more – is being restored in the last Adam and the second man, Christ Jesus (Rom 5:12-21). And this through the joyful proclamation of the 'Gospel of God' in antithesis to the 'Gospel of Man', as revealed by the ascended Christ to Paul.

3-4 *"concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness [Holy Spirit] by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord"*—Paul immediately defines the Gospel. *First*, God is revealed as triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *Second*, the Gospel concerns the Son—the God-man who is descended from David, according to his human lineage. Although, through Joseph, this was by promise not by natural birth, fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant based on election, and thus foundational to Paul's Gospel in which both Jew and Gentile are justified by faith according to election (9:6-11; Gal 3:16, 18; 4:23, 28). Christ's Davidic descent entails the promise and fulfilment of receiving a "kingdom forever" (2 Sam 7:13, 16), an eternal kingdom. While the prophecy that, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" (2 Sam 7:14) has an immediate fulfilment in Solomon, its final and full realization is in Jesus, as affirmed by the Gospels and by Paul (Lk 1:31-33; Matt 22:45, citing Psa 110). This is not academic; it is the core of the prophetic promises and of the Gospel (v. 2) that God's Kingdom has come in his Son, the God-man: Jesus, who is truly God and truly man, is now sitting on the throne of the universe, governing *all things* (i.e. history, this time-space world) according to the Father's predetermined plan (Eph 1:9-11). *Third*, he was appointed Son of God and King of the universe by the resurrection in the power of the Holy Spirit. God the Father, in the face of the nations' tumult and rage, declared:

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."

Psalms 2:6–7

Paul cites Psalm 2, in his preaching at Antioch in Pisidia, as proof of Christ's resurrection and ascension (also cited in Heb 1:5 & 5:5). God the Son was installed as King through the power of the resurrection. At which time the Father invited him to enter into his inheritance:

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.

Psalms 2:8–9

And so, from the point of the ascension, Christ, as the victorious King of heaven *and* earth, has been exercising his ascension power by taking the nations as his inheritance. But not only taking them but also ruling them: breaking them with a rod of iron. This flows through into what we have called the Great Commission, but sadly misconstrued as a commission only to rescue sinners from hell. Jesus, echoing Psalm 2, declared, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18). While God the Son was never without authority, he arose and ascended, in his humanity, as the Son of Man, blazing the trail for the new humanity—one restored in Christ to dominion. As Christ's "fellow heirs" (Rom 8:17; Eph 3:6), this authority is now delegated to his disciples, providing both the divine mandate and the supernatural power to disciple the nations and receive them as their inheritance.

But what does it mean to "make disciples of all nations"? Myopically, we have only looked to the individual application of the Gospel in 'personal salvation'. As necessary and as foundational as that is, it is not the full import of what Jesus mandates us to do. Rather, we are commanded to disciple 'nations'. Clearly, that involves individuals but individuals comprise nations. It was whole 'nations' that Jesus received as his inheritance at the ascension (Psa 2). And so, the Great Commission is the reiteration of God's original purpose for humankind: the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:26-28. The etymology (origin) of the word 'culture' is highly significant. It is derived from Middle English, denoting a cultivated piece of land, originally from Latin *colere* 'tend, cultivate'; and thus, we have such words as *agriculture* and *viticulture*. And from this arose 'cultivation of the mind, faculties, or manners'; that is, human culture, from high culture of the arts and learning to economics, social ethics, and politics etc. Grounded in its original meaning of land cultivation, of taking raw elements (seed and soil) to produce a higher level product (bread and wine), the creation or cultural mandate of Genesis entails stewarding God's gifts in such a way it increases benefit to society, to produce (multiply) and perfect (mature) the gifts that God has given (Gen 2:15). However, with mankind's rebellion in Adam the ground was cursed, in line with God's covenant arrangement, and his ability to cultivate it was affected (Gen 3:17-19). This, the last Adam terminated when he became a curse for us, bearing in himself the covenant consequences of Adam's disobedience (Gal 3:13). And so, now the Gospel is not only the power of God that saves individuals but lifts the curse from them to more fully carry out the creation mandate, to cultivate the gifts of God and thus take human society to more advanced levels. Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 show us that the blessing and curses of the covenant affect productivity and human culture, all areas of life. Thus covenant is the core of this epistle.

What the first Adam failed to do, the last Adam and the second man now achieves, and along with him, his body the *ecclesia*. So what is the commission? It is to baptise and to teach. In harmony with God's original Creation Mandate (Gen 1:26-28), it is cultural. In other words, the baptising and teaching of individuals will have a flow-on effect to culture. It will come to bear upon social values and institutions, from families, to churches, to civil society. But this is where we err. We have robbed the Gospel of its full force by denying that the law has no application for today, particularly in society. The commission is to 'teach', it is educative rather than evangelistic. But to teach what? Not only the core verities of the Gospel as set forth by Paul – the incarnation and resurrection – but also the law of God. We are mandated by Jesus to "teach them [nations] to obey all that I have *commanded* you" (Matt 28:20). What did Jesus command?—All that is taught by Moses in the law, in fact, he decreed that any one who teaches a relaxation of even the least of the commandments will then be least in the Kingdom of God (Matt 5:19). Paul later in Romans explicates the relationship of Law and Gospel, showing that, in harmony with Jesus, it is not abrogated but reinstated (Matt 5:17-18; Rom 3:31). God's commandments and our obedience are integral to culture. His blessings or curses will either advance or inhibit the development of human society—culture. Harkening back to Psalm 2, John, the revelator, shows that the teaching ministry of the ascended Son of God, as a "sharp sword", will strike down nations and establish his covenant rule over them:

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.

Revelation 19:15

Additionally, the Son of God as Paul's centre-point of the Gospel is seen in v. 9 of this chapter; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32; 1 Cor 15:28; 2 Cor 1:19; Gal 1:16; 2:20; 4:4, 6; Eph 4:13; Col 1:13.

5 "through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations"—In view of the Gospel of God as defined in v. 3-4, Paul's commission, as an emissary, authorizes him to "bring about **the obedience of faith**...among the nations". This is *the* apostolic objective: the obedience of the nations (16:26; 15:18), of all peoples and cultures. However, obedience and faith are synonymous, – the two sides of the one coin – as will unfold in the rest of the epistle: 'the obedience which consists in faith'. 'Faith' (*pistis*) occurs in Romans 35 times and 20 times in Galatians. It is integral to Paul's Gospel, being misconstrued by many contemporary Christians as an autonomous principle to access 'health and wealth'. They are taught, "If you confess it, you'll possess it!" All one needs to do is to confess a promise of Scripture sufficiently and believe it hard enough and God will act on one's behalf. This is not biblical faith; it is pagan psychic manipulation of the deity. Rather, biblical faith is obedience to God's word and will, *pistis* meaning firm persuasion, trust, fidelity, and faithfulness. Obedience to the Lord – and thus to his covenant and law – was never designed by him apart from faith, nor faith from obedience. As will be seen, this was the error of ancient Israel through to the Judaism of Paul's day; reducing God's covenant to works-righteousness, to ritualism. Like a prophet, he speaks as the mouth of God, from which issues the sharp sword of God's law-word, requiring a faith-based obedience to the Lord and his covenant by the nations. And

in this way they will "Serve the Lord with fear" and "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry" with them (Psa 2:11-12).

In the five-fold covenant structure (see Part 1) the "obedience of faith" coincides with the *ethical* component—the *stipulations* of the covenant, that is, God's law. Not ancient Israel's misuse of the law to provide an autonomous means of *covenant status* but rather as a means of *kingdom extension* (see commentary 3:19-20). The obedience of the nations to the living God is Paul's overarching apostolic project.

7 *"To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*—Rome, for Paul, is a strategic 'gateway' city for the Gospel as were Antioch and Ephesus in the east, the hub of the entire Roman Empire. An apostolic presence in Rome would facilitate an expansion of the Gospel both geographically and culturally. Paul's plan was that Rome would contribute to the expansion westward (1:8-16a; 15:24, 28; refer also to [Paul's Purpose in Part 1](#)). Rome's faith was already known throughout the world (v. 8).

1:8-16a — Paul's Intention

9–10 *"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you."*—That Paul is exercised in prayer for them suggests that Rome already falls within his apostolic sphere of influence and concern (see [Paul's Occasion in Part 1](#)). Also of note is that true service for God flows from one's *spirit*; true worship is in "*spirit and truth*" (Jn 4:23). While the Gospel must be set forth in propositional truth statements, as the epistle is about to do, it must be delivered by those who cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a *right spirit* within me" (Psa 51:10). Sadly, it is very easy to proclaim the truth but be devoid of God's heart, to lack a renewed spirit, a heart that is current with God and tender before him. Furthermore, in true brokenness, Paul feels his utter dependence on God for the release to be with them; he is subject to God's will.

11–12 *"For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine."*—Paul's *apostolic grace* (v. 5a) carried with it an impartation for *apostolic purpose* (v. 5b). Apostles of Christ are graced to mediate spiritual *charisma* (gifts and graces) to his church. But which gifts and graces did Paul want to impart? While *tis* can be rendered 'some' it can equally be rendered 'certain'; and so, with his definite purpose in visiting Rome (the westward mission to Spain and the Gentile world), Paul wished to impart "a certain" spiritual grace (*charisma*, singular noun), *one* that would "strengthen" or "establish" them in that apostolic purpose—the obedience of the nations (v. 5). As the remainder of the epistle shows, Paul imparts a vision of the sovereignty of God over the cosmos—over history and humankind. The creator-God's original plan for the world is restored in Christ (5:12-21; 8:18-25). This necessitates the spiritual eyes of the church being opened, as was the case in Ephesus when Paul prayed:

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the ***Spirit of wisdom and of revelation*** in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, 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.

Ephesians 1:17–21

The "*certain* spiritual gift" that Paul wishes to impart is the "spirit of wisdom and revelation" in the knowledge of Christ and the hope to which the *ecclesia*, the body of Christ has been called. Our vision of the ascended Christ determines our vision of history—of the hope to which we have been called; that is, the obedience of the nations and of every enemy subdued under his feet (1:5; Psa 110; 2). He has ascended in space-time history and is currently subduing his enemies under his *ecclesia*; if Christ is the head of his body, the church, we are the feet under whom they are subdued (16:20). Therefore, our Christology (doctrine of Christ) must determine our eschatology (doctrine of end things). Christ will not go out of history defeated, contrary to many end-time schemes. He will build his *ecclesia* and the gates of hell will not withstand its advance; it will be granted the authority of the kingdom, binding and loosing according to the will of God (Mtt 16:18-20); but binding and loosing what?—again contrary to what many have taught, it is not referring to the binding and loosing of the demonic. Rather, Jesus' reference to 'binding and loosing' was rooted in the Jewish *Targum*, signifying either the judicial prohibiting or permitting of certain things

according to God's law. And so, Christ's *ecclesia* (originally the term for the Greek city-state's governing assembly) has been called to govern the world through the word of God, to provide an objective standard in God's law-word for justice: the covenant *stipulations* (laws) and *sanctions* (penalties). This is what it means to disciple the nations, "teaching them to observe all that I have *commanded*" (Mtt 28:20; 5:17-19; 1 Cor 5:9-6:3; Deut 28). And thus, Romans reveals Christ as both "just and justifier" (3:26), reinstating God's covenant law, not as the means of works-righteousness but as a charter for living; God's justice for the world – Jew and Gentile – is the theme.

Consequently, without this supernatural impartation of vision we will view Romans myopically, as dealing with 'my personal salvation' and justification only. Therefore, as Paul taught and proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom of God among them there would be a very particular supernatural impartation to them: a vision of God's cosmic and global purpose to restore man to the image of his Son and to a paradisiacal state of justice and peace in the earth. This impartation of vision is from *personal renewal to cultural reconstruction*.

As we embark on this study of Paul's Epistle to the Romans – indeed, the *divine manifesto for paradise restored* – let us pray and ask the Holy Spirit to grant us the "*spirit of wisdom and revelation* in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of our hearts enlightened, that we may know what is the hope to which he has called us".

1:16b-17 — Paul's Gospel

16–17 "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation [soteria] to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'*"—As we noted in v. 1-2, the *Gospel of God* is antithetical to the *Gospel of man*—to the ultimacy of man, personified in Caesar – the god-man – and his messianic pretensions to the salvation of the world, institutionalized in the sovereignty of the Roman state. By stepping into the Roman arena – the capital of the humanist empire – he is declaring spiritual and cultural war against the idol of man, of 'man as the measure of all things' (Protagoras, 490-420 BC). And he is not intimidated, nor ashamed of the victorious declaration (*euangélion*) of God's sovereignty and ultimacy – of Christ as Lord – as it is the power of God for the salvation of the world for all who believe, to the Jew first and to the Greek (see 2 Tim 1:8). Paul's vision of God is such, that the might of the Roman Empire is seen for what it is—pretentious and impotent in the face of the Gospel. Humanism's power to save is a chimera, a delusion, a fantasy; it is ultimately impotent. And yet, this is the hope set forth by its religious claims of ultimacy, that it is saviour of the world. As the charlatan that Rome is, she is reduced to cheap trickery to hold the people: *bread and circuses*. Free handouts of food and entertainment, including public baths, gladiators, exotic animals, chariot races, sports competition, and theatre placated the masses. Augustus staged extraordinary games of up to 10,000 gladiators pitched against 3,500 wild animals from Africa. The Circus Maximus, site of the great chariot races, accommodated 300,000 people and the Coliseum, 80,000. This was seduction on an industrial scale. Nonetheless, this little bowlegged, beetle-browed rabbi – Paul – faced off with the juggernaut that was Rome. A classic David and Goliath confrontation. The parallel between 1st and 21st centuries is obvious. Rather than adopting Rome's sensate entertainment culture and values to draw the crowds, as does our contemporary church, Paul stood in defiance of the Philistine's grandiose posturing, declaring, "You come in your human might, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied! The Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into my hand!" Paul, like David, is not intimidated by the humanist braggadocio – its intellectual sophistry and statist power – but, rather, relies on the power of God demonstrated through the seemingly impotent weaponry of a shepherd's staff and sling. With a single shot from that young shepherd boy's sling the Philistine is brought down. Empowered by the hand of God, the stone embeds in the forehead of the giant and he falls dead. For Paul, the Gospel is that stone—the power of God to salvation, the fatal shot to the head of the Greco-Roman colossus, to the humanistic belief system. The weapons of Paul's warfare are powerful in God to destroy strongholds—reasonings and speculations raised up against the knowledge of God (2 Cor 10:1-6).

With 'man as his own measure' – his own ultimate reference point – there is no coherent explanation for the phenomenon that is man nor for the cosmos. Living in denial and active suppression of the revelation of God in the world that is without and the world that is within, humanistic man is bereft of transcendence and meaning. In moral and intellectual rebellion against God, he is given over to countless sensual and immoral pursuits (1:18-32). And so, the Gospel, as the power of God to salvation, declares God in Christ as the true and living God – eternal, self-existent, and self-revealing – breaks in upon his slavery to sin. It, *first*, saves him from the penalty of sin—the eschatological wrath of God, the judgement and condemnation to an eternal death, passed on that day when all men give an account (1:18; 2:6-11; 5:9; 13:11); *second*, it saves him from the power of sin (3:9-18, 23; 5:12-21; 6:1-14; 8:1-11)— his justification, and salvation from wrath, on that future day echoes back into the

present, setting him free from sin and death; and, *third*, it saves him from the product of sin—foreknown and predestined, his future glorification also echoes back, as God's image and glory are progressively restored to him (8:16-17, 29-30), and moreover, the whole cosmos is set free from the bondage of sin (8:18-22). In fact, we have misconstrued the full significance of salvation, reducing it to 'personal salvation', and that, reduced to the 'salvation of our soul', our deliverance from eternal damnation. While this is certainly the part, it is not the whole. 'Salvation' (*soteria*) and 'to save' (*sozo*) not only refers to divine deliverance but also inner health and wholeness. Man and the cosmos are delivered from the curse of sin and restored to *shalom*—to wholeness, to the health and integration of the created order. Saved from his enmity with God and restored to his right mind, man is reinstated to his place in the cosmos, as God's vice-regent in the earth.

In v. 17, Paul now states the thesis of his epistle: "*for in it [the gospel] the righteousness [dikaiosune] of God is revealed from faith for [to] faith, as it is written, 'The righteous [dikaioi] shall live by faith'.*" —He opens with the conjunction "for", thus connecting v. 16 and explaining why the Gospel is the power of God: it is the revelation of God's righteousness. This is the theological premise developed throughout the epistle. The Greek word group that Paul uses for "righteousness/just/justification" (*dikaio*) is rooted in the Septuagint (LXX), rendering the Hebrew *sedek* (*sdk*) word group, conveying the basic meaning of conformity to a norm. It is to be understood in the context of covenant: Israel's fulfillment of God's covenant. The word group not only relates to conduct but also, and more significantly, status: to be justified is to be declared righteous. Paul picks this up as the import of *dikaioûn*, evidenced by his whole argument in Romans; it simply means to acquit, to confer a righteous status on, and of itself does not infer moral transformation. It is therefore a mistake to confuse sanctification with justification: the former is a process of *imparted* righteousness (behavioural transformation), while the latter is an event of *imputed* righteousness (judicial status), one is legal the other vital. And this declared status of righteousness – justification – is by faith, in fact, "from faith to faith"—from beginning to end it is faith. Citing Habakkuk 2:4, Paul is thus saying, "He that is just by faith shall live" (also cited in Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). And thus, through the "obedience of faith" (v. 5) the righteousness of God in Christ is transferred to our account:

Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Isaiah 53:11

Our covenant status is secured and from this judicial basis one then lives in covenant obedience to God. The status of those who believe has been changed: from covenant-breaker to covenant-keeper.

Paul then explicates this covenant status and its implications – from the personal to the cultural – throughout the epistle. Covenant proves to be the instrument by which his purpose for man and the cosmos is accomplished: *the Kingdom of God comes through Covenant*.

In conclusion, Paul has introduced the grand theme of the epistle: *the Gospel of God*. He sets it forth in antithesis to the *Gospel of Man*, personified in the god-man, Caesar, and institutionalized in the ultimacy of the state. In its messianic claims of sovereignty and salvation, the state is the corporate manifestation of man's rebellion against the ascended Son of God who sits on the throne of the universe. And so, he holds them in derision and laughs at their childish rebellion. Man either falls on the stone or it falls on him (Mtt 21:44). The stone, carved without human hands, has now been cast on the feet of the human colossus and is about to fill the earth.

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