

**PROPAGATING THE RESURRECTED,  
ASCENDED, AND ALL-INCLUSIVE CHRIST  
AS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

(Thursday—First Morning Session)

Message One

**Propagating the Resurrected Christ as the Firstborn Son  
according to the Promise Made to the Fathers**

Scripture Reading: Acts 13:23, 32-34, 38-39; Rom. 1:3-4; 8:29

- I. “From this man’s seed, God, according to promise, brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus...And we announce to you the gospel of the promise made to the fathers”—Acts 13:23, 32:**
- A. The seed of David mentioned in 2 Samuel 7:12 is actually Christ as God’s firstborn Son (v. 14; Heb. 1:5-6), who has both divinity and humanity and is typified by Solomon.
  - B. The word concerning “your seed” in 2 Samuel 7:12 and “My son” in verse 14 implies that the seed of David would become the Son of God; that is, a human seed would become a divine Son:
    - 1. This corresponds with Paul’s word in Romans 1:3-4 concerning Christ as the seed of David being designated the Son of God in His humanity in resurrection.
    - 2. These verses clearly reveal that a seed of man, that is, a son of man, can become the Son of God:
      - a. God Himself, the divine One, became a human seed, the seed of a man, David.
      - b. This seed was Jesus, the God-man, who was the Son of God by virtue of His divinity alone—Luke 1:35.
      - c. Through His resurrection He as the human seed became the Son of God in His humanity as well.
- II. “God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; this day have I begotten You’”—Acts 13:33:**
- A. In verses 32 and 33 we see that Christ as the Firstborn of God was promised to the fathers, and God fulfilled this promise by raising up Jesus.
  - B. Resurrection was a birth to the man Jesus:
    - 1. He was begotten by God in His resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God among many brothers—Rom. 8:29.
    - 2. He was the only begotten Son from eternity—John 1:18; 3:16.
    - 3. After His incarnation, through resurrection He was begotten by God in His humanity to be God’s firstborn Son—Heb. 1:6.
  - C. Paul was able to see the Lord’s resurrection in Psalm 2:7: “You are My Son; / Today I have begotten You”:
    - 1. Paul applied the word *today* to the day of the Lord’s resurrection.

2. This means that Christ's resurrection was His birth as the firstborn Son of God.
  3. Jesus, the Son of Man, was born to be the Son of God through being raised up from the dead; therefore, God's raising up Jesus from the dead was His begetting of Him to be His firstborn Son—Acts 13:33.
- D. Through incarnation God's only begotten Son put on humanity and became the God-man (John 1:14, 18; Luke 1:35); then in resurrection this God-man was born of God to be His Firstborn (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:6; Rom. 8:29):
1. Before incarnation God's only begotten Son did not have the human nature; He had only the divine nature.
  2. In resurrection God's firstborn Son has the human nature as well as the divine nature.
- E. Through His resurrection Christ was born to be the firstborn Son, and at the same time all His believers were born to be the many sons of God—1 Pet. 1:3; Heb. 2:10:
1. Among these many sons, only the Firstborn is God's only begotten Son—John 1:18; 1 John 4:9.
  2. This only begotten Son of God, in His resurrected humanity, is also the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:29.
  3. The Firstborn has both divinity and humanity, and we, His believers as God's many sons, also possess both the human nature and the divine nature—2 Pet. 1:4.
- F. In Acts 13 Paul was not preaching Christ as the only begotten Son, as the Gospel of John does (1:18; 3:16); rather, in Acts 13 Paul was preaching Christ as the firstborn Son of God, for propagation:
1. As the only begotten Son, the Lord is the embodiment of the divine life; the Gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that, as the Son of God, He is the embodiment of the divine life—1:4.
  2. Through resurrection Christ became the firstborn Son of God as the life-dispenser for the propagation of life—Rom. 8:29.
  3. First, Christ was the only begotten Son as the embodiment of life; now He is also the firstborn Son for the propagation of life.
  4. Through His becoming the firstborn Son of God in resurrection, the divine life has been dispensed into all His believers to bring forth the propagation of the life that is embodied in Him.

**III. “As to His having raised Him up from the dead,...He spoke in this way, ‘I will give you the holy things of David, the faithful things’”—Acts 13:34:**

- A. The resurrected Christ is the holy and faithful things of David; *the holy things of David, the faithful things* refers to the resurrected Christ—vv. 33-34.
- B. The phrase *the holy things of David, the faithful things* indicates that Christ was of David, for it was out of David's seed that God raised up such a One—Rom. 1:3-4.
- C. The phrase *the holy things of David, the faithful things* is actually a divine title, a title of Christ.
- D. These holy and faithful things are all the aspects of what Christ is, such as life,

light, grace, righteousness, holiness, the bread of life, the living water, power, wisdom, glory, the depths of God, the Head, the Body, the firstfruits, and the second man.

- E. All the holy and faithful things are Christ Himself as mercies to us—Isa. 55:3; 2 Chron. 6:42; Psa. 89:1.
- F. We need to see that the resurrected Christ is all the holy and faithful things given to us by God as an all-inclusive gift; this was the Christ preached by Paul in Acts 13.

**IV. “Through this One forgiveness of sins is announced to you,” and “in this One everyone who believes is justified”—vv. 38-39:**

- A. To be forgiven of sins is on the negative side and is for our release from condemnation—v. 38.
- B. To be justified is on the positive side and is for our reconciliation to God and our being accepted by Him—v. 39; Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:24-25.
- C. In Acts 13:38 and 39 Paul twice spoke of “this One”:
  - 1. This is the One who has been resurrected to be God’s firstborn Son, our Savior, and the many holy and faithful things.
  - 2. Through the One who is the firstborn Son, the Savior, and the holy and faithful things, forgiveness of sins has been announced to us, and through this One we are justified.
  - 3. The One by whom we are forgiven and justified is Himself our forgiveness and justification:
    - a. Both forgiveness and justification are mercies from God to us, and these mercies are aspects of the resurrected Christ—vv. 33-34, 38-39.
    - b. Christ in His resurrection is our forgiveness and justification.

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE WORK OF CHRIST IN HIS RESURRECTION**

**To Be Born as the Firstborn Son of God**

The New Testament reveals that in Christ’s resurrection He was born as the firstborn Son of God. Acts 13:33 says, “God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; this day have I begotten You.’” Furthermore, Romans 8:29 refers to Christ as God’s Son, the Firstborn among many brothers. From these two verses we can see that on the day of resurrection Jesus was begotten by God to be the firstborn Son of God.

Of course, Christ’s incarnation was also a birth, but that birth made Him the Son of Man. Christ did not become the Son of God through incarnation. In eternity past, before His incarnation and before His resurrection, Christ was already the Son of God. The Bible reveals that Christ, the Son of God, is eternal. God is triune—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—and all three are eternal. God the Father is eternal (Isa. 9:6), God the Son is eternal (Heb. 7:3), and God the Spirit is eternal (9:14).

To be eternal means to have no beginning and no ending. Students of the Bible sometimes use a circle to signify eternity. A circle has no beginning and no ending, and it is difficult to tell whether one point on a circle comes before or after another point. In the same way the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all eternal, having no beginning or ending.

Hebrews 7:3 tells us that the Son of God is eternal, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. The revelation in the Bible is not that the Father existed before the Son, that the Son came into being after the Father, or that the Spirit came after the Son. Rather, the Bible says that all three are eternal.

The Son of God is eternal, yet this eternal Son of God was born as the Son of Man about two thousand years ago. In His incarnation He was born of Mary, and by that birth He became the Son of Man. Therefore, His incarnation was His first birth. But the Bible also tells us that Christ had a second birth. In His first birth Christ was born as the Son of Man, and in His second birth He was born as the firstborn Son of God. On the one hand, John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." This verse indicates that Christ was God's only Son. On the other hand, Romans 8:29 says, "That He might be the Firstborn among many brothers." Have you ever considered that Christ is the Son of God in two ways? In the first way He was God's only begotten Son, and in the second way He is the firstborn Son among many sons. Romans 8:29 says that the believers are to be conformed not to the image of the only begotten Son but to the image of God's firstborn Son.

At this point we need to ask ourselves what the difference is between the only begotten Son and the firstborn Son. Our first response may be to say that the only begotten Son had no brothers, but the firstborn Son has many brothers. Although this is true, we still need to ask what the difference is in the Son of God Himself. The difference between the only begotten Son of God in eternity past and the firstborn Son of God in resurrection is that in eternity past, before His incarnation, He possessed only divinity without humanity. But through the process of incarnation, He put on humanity. He passed through human living, entered into death, and came out in resurrection. In resurrection He still remained the Son of God according to His divinity, but there was something more; He also possessed the humanity that He obtained through incarnation. The humanity that He put on in incarnation was also brought into resurrection to share in the sonship. This is why Acts 13:33 says that on the day of resurrection Christ was begotten of God to be God's Son. It means that resurrection "sonized" His humanity, made it also the Son of God. According to Acts 13:33, Christ's resurrection was a birth, making Him not only God's only begotten Son with divinity but also God's firstborn Son with both divinity and humanity.

Today Christ is the Son of God in two respects: He is God's only begotten Son, and He is also God's firstborn Son. However, if He were only God's only begotten Son, He could not have any brothers. To have us as His brothers, He must possess humanity, but as God's only begotten Son in eternity past, He possessed only divinity, not humanity. Nevertheless, in His incarnation Christ put on humanity, and through resurrection He brought this humanity into sonship. In this way He became God's firstborn Son with both divinity and humanity. Then, as the life-giving Spirit, He entered into us to make us also sons of God. Now we are the many sons of God being conformed to the image, not of God's only begotten Son but of His firstborn Son. Therefore, as God's firstborn Son, Christ has many brothers. We all need to see that being born as the firstborn Son of God was a great work, which Christ accomplished through His resurrection. Although it is clearly taught in the Bible, many Christians have never seen this matter.

On the day of His resurrection Christ was begotten by God in His humanity. He became the firstborn Son of God in order to produce many sons of God. We need to realize that the date of our regeneration was the date of Christ's resurrection. When Christ was resurrected from the dead, we, all the believers, were resurrected with Him (1 Pet. 1:3). Through His resurrection He was born to be God's firstborn Son, and at the same time all His believers were born to be the many sons of God. On the day of Christ's resurrection, all God's chosen

people were resurrected and were born to be God's many sons. Now God has many sons with both divinity and humanity. But among these many sons, only the Firstborn is His only begotten Son. This only begotten Son of God, in His resurrected humanity, is also the firstborn Son of God. As the firstborn Son of God, He has both divinity and humanity, and we, His believers as God's many sons, also possess both the human nature and the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Now day by day we are being conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son (Rom. 8:29). (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1980*, vol. 2, "The Secret of Experiencing Christ," pp. 470-472)

### **The Holy and the Faithful Things of David**

In Acts 13:34 Paul speaks a further word regarding the resurrection of Christ: "As to His having raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to corruption, He spoke in this way, 'I will give you the holy things of David, the faithful things.'" Verses 33 and 34 are concerned with the resurrected Christ. Verse 33 indicates that Christ's resurrection was His second birth to bring Him forth as the firstborn Son of God. God promised to give Him to His people, and this resurrected One is the holy and faithful things of David. The phrase *the holy things of David, the faithful things* indicates that Christ was of David, for it was out of David's seed that God raised up such a One. To God, the resurrected Christ is the firstborn Son, but to us, He is the Savior. Moreover, He is a great gift given by God to His chosen people, and this gift is entitled *the holy things...the faithful things*.

The Greek word for *the holy things* here is in the plural. The same Greek word is used for *Holy One* in the next verse, but in the singular. However, it is not the regular word for *holy*; it is a Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *chesed*, which is translated "mercies" in Isaiah 55:3, 2 Chronicles 6:42, and Psalm 89:1, both in the Septuagint and in the King James Version. In Psalm 89 the word *mercies* in plural in verse 1 (KJV) is the same word as for *Holy One* in singular in verse 19. This Holy One is Christ, the Son of David, in whom God's mercies are centered and conveyed. Hence, *the holy things of David, the faithful things* refers to the resurrected Christ. This is fully proved by the context, especially by *Your Holy One* in the next verse, and by the verse following Isaiah 55:3.

Paul's thought in Acts 13:33 and 34 is very deep. The resurrected Christ, who is God's firstborn Son brought forth through His second birth, His resurrection, is the holy and faithful things. In verse 34 the word *faithful* means "trustworthy." The resurrected Christ is the holy and faithful things God gives to us. Here Paul indicates that the resurrected Christ is not only our Savior bringing us God's salvation and that He is not only the firstborn Son of God. This resurrected One is also the holy and faithful things as a gift given to us by God.

It is easy for us to understand that Christ is our Savior. It is more difficult to understand that Christ is the firstborn Son of God. But it is very difficult to understand that the resurrected Christ is the holy and faithful things given to us by God. The holy and faithful things cover a wide span, a span much wider than that covered by the titles *Savior* and *firstborn Son*. The phrase *the holy things...the faithful things* is actually a divine title, a title of Christ. In these verses Christ is called the holy and faithful things. The Savior God raised up out of the seed of David has become the holy and faithful things.

These holy and faithful things are all the aspects of what Christ is. According to the New Testament, Christ is life, light, grace, righteousness, holiness, sanctification, and justification. He is also the bread of life and the living water. Furthermore, the holy and faithful things include all the aspects of Christ unveiled in 1 Corinthians: power, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, glory, the depths of God, the unique foundation of God's building, the Passover, the unleavened bread, the spiritual food, the spiritual drink, the

spiritual rock, the Head, the Body, the firstfruits, the second man, and the last Adam. We see many more aspects of Christ in the Gospel of John, such as the Shepherd and the pasture. Oh, how much Christ is to us as the holy and faithful things! As the resurrected One, He is the firstborn Son, the Savior, and all the holy and faithful things.

In the Old Testament the holy and faithful things are regarded as mercies. Isaiah 55:3 speaks of “the sure mercies shown to David.” Second Chronicles 6:42 mentions “the mercies of David” (KJV), the Lord’s servant, and Psalm 89:1 says, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever” (KJV). Mercy implies both love and grace, but it reaches further than love. Where love and grace cannot reach, mercy can reach. All the holy and faithful things are Christ Himself as mercies to us. Life is a mercy, and light is also a mercy. Likewise, righteousness, holiness, justification, and sanctification are mercies. In chapter ten of the Gospel of John we have the door, the pasture, and the Shepherd, all of which are mercies. If we took time to count all the aspects of these mercies, we would have a long list of mercies. A husband’s love for his wife and the wife’s submission to her husband are Christ as mercies to us. If a husband, in Christ, loves his wife, this surely is a mercy. His love for her is Christ Himself as a mercy to him. In a similar way, if a sister, in Christ, submits to her husband, that also is a mercy. Her submission is Christ Himself as a mercy to her.

Our speaking the word of God year after year inexhaustibly is certainly Christ as a mercy to us. This is not a matter of our ability or gift. It is altogether a matter of mercy. Not only is it a mercy for us to speak the word of God, but even the dear Savior is our speaking. Our speaking is Christ, and to us this speaking Christ is a mercy. Though our speaking may not be eloquent, our speaking may be full of Christ. This is wholly due to Christ being a mercy to us in speaking the word of God.

We all need to see that the resurrected Christ is all the holy and faithful things as mercies given to us by God as an all-inclusive gift. This was the Christ preached by Paul in Acts 13. Paul, in his gospel message, not only preached Christ from the Old Testament but also preached the resurrected Christ as the holy and faithful things. Actually, what Paul proclaimed here in his preaching of the gospel requires all the Epistles written by him for its definition. Therefore, if we want to see more concerning Christ as the holy and faithful things, we need to study the fourteen Epistles of Paul. In his preaching Paul set up an excellent pattern for us to follow in our gospel preaching today. Like Paul, we need to preach Christ in a rich and uplifted way.

### **Through Him Forgiveness of Sins Being Announced and in Him Whoever Believes Being Justified from All Things**

In Acts 13:38 and 39 Paul goes on to say, “Therefore let it be known to you, men, brothers, that through this One forgiveness of sins is announced to you; and from all the things from which you were not able to be justified by the law of Moses, in this One everyone who believes is justified.” To be forgiven of sins (v. 38) is on the negative side and is for our release from condemnation. To be justified (v. 39) is on the positive side and is for our reconciliation to God and acceptance by Him.

In both verse 38 and verse 39 Paul speaks of “this One.” Who is this One? This is the One who has been resurrected to be God’s firstborn Son, our Savior, and the many holy and faithful things. Therefore, through the One who is the holy and faithful things as God’s mercies to us, we are forgiven and justified. Through the One who is the firstborn Son, the Savior, and the holy and faithful things, forgiveness of sins has been announced to us. And in this One we are justified from all the things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses.

The One by whom we are forgiven and justified is not only our Savior; He Himself is our forgiveness and justification. Both forgiveness and justification are mercies from God to us, and these mercies are aspects of the resurrected Christ. Today Christ in His resurrection is our forgiveness and our justification. Never consider forgiveness and justification as something apart from Christ. Both forgiveness and justification are aspects of Christ Himself as mercies from God to us, and these mercies are holy and faithful things. To be sure, forgiveness and justification are gifts of God, and they certainly are holy and faithful things. If we have this understanding, we shall see that forgiveness and justification are not common. Rather, they are holy. Furthermore, they are faithful, sure, trustworthy. This is Paul's preaching of Christ as the Firstborn of God in Acts 13, through which many were saved. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 2995-2999)