

Essay 1: Jesus - the Son of David According to the Flesh

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, 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, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 1:1–4)

The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: (Matthew 1:1)

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” (Matthew 9:27)

All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?” (Matthew 12:23)

And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.” (Matthew 15:22)

And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!” (Matthew 20:30–31)

The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9)

But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant and said to Him, “Do You hear what these children are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ‘OUT OF THE MOUTH OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABIES YOU HAVE PREPARED PRAISE FOR YOURSELF?’” (Matthew 21:15–16)

Okay! There is a lot of quotes for you, but all of them emphasize the same thing: Jesus is a descendant of David. He is the one that everyone expected. They were ready for Him, at any time, to take a sword, rally the people, and drive the Romans out of the Promise Land. So, when Jesus didn't behave like the king they expected, they rejected Him and crucified Him.

Of course, Jesus knew these things the whole time like He said in Matthew 21:15-16 quoted above. He knew he was descended from David, and He knew He had a right to the throne. Jesus knew that if He wanted to, He could fulfill all of their expectations and then some, but it was necessary for Jesus to die to those expectations in order to become worthy of the throne. This counterintuitive approach to establishing a kingdom and being more than victorious is what Paul calls the foolishness of the Cross, but it is exactly what Jesus needed to do in order to set up an eternal kingdom.

You see, Jesus had this thought constantly in the back of His mind, and He was tempted to go that route on several occasions. After fasting in the wilderness for forty days, Jesus faced three temptations:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, **“If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”** But He answered and said, **“It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’ ”** Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, **“If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU’; and ‘ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’ ”** Jesus said to him, **“On the other hand, it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’ ”** Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, **“All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.”** Then Jesus said to him, **“Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’ ”** (Matthew 4:1–10)

Some may wonder why Matthew orders the temptation the way he does while Luke switches the last two. One of Matthew’s goals was to show that Jesus was descended from David and fulfills the Messianic prophecies, but he had another objective as well, and that was to demonstrate the heavenly nature of the kingdom. The temptation that Matthew places last is the temptation to rule over all the kingdoms of the world. This was a very real possibility for Jesus, and this was something that He could accomplish with no difficulty. The problem was that was never God’s plan.

These temptations of Jesus are not as selfish as one may think. Turning stones to bread would obviously help His appetite after fasting for so long, but, more importantly to Jesus, it would feed His people who He had witnessed living under the boot of the Roman empire for thirty years. Jesus casting Himself down from the temple would obviously bring Him popularity, but, more importantly, it would persuade the thousands upon thousands of people that witnessed that event to follow Him then and there. The temptation to rule over the earthly kingdoms would bring Him prestige, but it would also restore His people to their former glory.

This temptation followed Jesus throughout His ministry. For example, in John 6, Jesus feeds the 5000. You will notice right away the similarity between this miracle and one of the three temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness. In reaction to this miracle, the people want to make Jesus king (John 6:14-15). In response to this, Jesus withdrew to the mountain by Himself. When you withdraw from a situation, you get away so that you can think, cool down, or even say a prayer. Jesus used His time alone on several occasions to calibrate Himself spiritually. Imagine how difficult turning down this opportunity must have been when He saw their excitement, their hope, and their sigh of relief at realizing who He was.

Jesus was also tempted in this way in Matthew 16. There, Jesus told His disciples that He was going to die. Despite promising He would rise again the third day, Peter rebuked Him and said, **“God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You”** (Matthew 16:22). Jesus’ response is telling:

But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” (Matthew 16:23)

Peter was taking on the role of the tempter like we saw in Matthew 4. How do you keep someone from being killed? You pick up the sword. Peter did just that as we are going to see. But to do such a thing is to work against God’s interests. God did not want Jesus to set up another earthly kingdom, but most people in His day wanted just that. Jesus calls Peter a stumbling block (*σκάνδαλον, skandalon*). A stumbling block, to put it simply, is an obstacle to someone’s faith (Romans 14:13). Peter inadvertently was trying to come between Jesus and the Father.

Finally, at the end of Jesus’ life, He was tempted once more to take the route that everyone expected Him to take.

While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd **with swords and clubs**, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him.” Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, “Hail, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. And Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you have come for.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus **reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear**. Then Jesus said to him, “**Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?**” “How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?” At that time Jesus said to the crowds, “**Have you come out with swords and clubs** to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. “But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.” **Then all the disciples left Him and fled.** (Matthew 26:47–56)

So, Peter takes on the role of Satan as he did in Matthew 16. In his attempt to save Jesus’ life, he lost his own in a sense. Jesus warns him that those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Then, Jesus says what had most likely been on His mind for a while, “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” He then turns to the people who came out **with swords** and asks them why they came out to Him in the way they did. What is He saying here? Since they came out with swords, they would perish by the sword. Jesus had to reject this type of kingdom or else He would be continuing the same cycles of violence that had been going on since Cain and Abel. Which brings us back to Jesus being descendent of David.

David is one of Israel’s most famous kings, if not the most famous. He was the standard by which many of the following kings were judged. They either walked like their father David or did not walk like their father David. David purposed in his heart to build a house for God. God wouldn’t allow him, however, because he was “a man of war and had shed blood” (1 Chronicles 28:3). If Jesus would have taken after David and engaged in war and shed blood, He would not have been worthy to build the New Covenant temple, much less be the chief cornerstone of it! So, Jesus had to reject His claim to the throne according to the flesh by dying to that world. Thus, He was raised up to be higher than any name that is named, including any name He could have gotten for Himself through bloodshed!