Descended from David

Romans 1:1–4 · Paul quotes the oldest confession we have that begins with Jesus's birth.

> *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God — which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures — concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh and was appointed to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead.*
>
> Christian Standard Bible

WORDS THE CHURCH ALREADY KNEW

1. Paul quotes back to a church he has never visited the words that church already knows by _____.
2. Romans was written about twenty-five years after the crucifixion. The creed Paul quotes in it is _____ than the letter that carries it.
3. Earlier than any of the four Gospels, inside a single generation of the cross, in words Paul assumes total strangers already know, this creed begins with a _____.

OF DAVID'S SEED

4. A *descendant* is a noun: a box he belongs in. The Greek word Paul uses, *genomenou* (a form of *ginomai*), is something that _____.
5. *Of David's seed* is not a biographical footnote. It's a _____ claim.
6. The birth at Bethlehem is not God starting something new; it's God _____ something very old. Advent has a backlog.

A RUMOR ABOUT EASTER

7. Romans 1:3 begins *concerning his Son*. Anyone who wants the adoptionist reading has to start the sentence in the _____.
8. Nothing about who he was changed on Easter morning. What changed was the way he was seen and the place he _____.
9. There is no copy of Romans that lacks the words *in power*. The "original" the theory needs has never been _____ by anyone.

THE FIRST OF OURS

10. It says, word for word, *by the resurrection of the dead*, and in Greek *the dead* is _____. Not his resurrection; theirs.
11. We'll gladly take a Jesus who is an example. We're slower to take a Jesus who is a rescue, because an _____ flatters us and a rescue doesn't.
12. Nicaea didn't invent that shape. Nicaea _____ it.

YOU WILL HEAR IT SAID One of the oldest creeds in the New Testament says Jesus was *appointed* Son of God at the resurrection. So before the resurrection he wasn't the Son of God. The first Christians thought he was a good man whom God promoted after his death. (That reading is called *adoptionism*, and it's at least as old as the second century.)

AND THE ANSWER IS Read the verse again, in three moves.

First, the Son is the subject. The sentence begins *concerning his Son*, and this Son *came to be of David's seed*. He is God's Son before David, before the flesh, before the resurrection is mentioned.

Second, take the harder word, *appointed*, and look at what he's appointed to: not *Son of God*, plain and simple, but *the powerful Son of God*, the Son *in power*. He isn't appointed to sonship. He's appointed to the throne that belongs to the Son.

Third, the theory needs *in power* to be a later addition, and no manuscript leaves it out. The theory rests on a guess, not on a copy anyone has ever seen.

And the picture: A king's son is his son from the day he's born. At thirty he's crowned, and nobody in the crowd concludes he was adopted that morning. The coronation didn't make him a son. It gave the son his throne.

THE VERB, A THIRD TIME, AND THE WORD FOR EASTER

γίνομαι *ginomai* · GHEE-noh-my · to come to be; to arrive into a condition that wasn't yours before *The day you came to be a grandparent: you were already you.*

γενομένου *genomenou* · gen-oh-MEN-oo · the form of *ginomai* in Romans 1:3: who *came to be* of David's seed *Galatians, Philippians, Romans: one verb, every single time.*

ὁρισθέντος *horisthentos* · hor-iss-THEN-toss · appointed; marked out for an office *A king's son is his son from birth. He is crowned at thirty.*

WHAT THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS SAID

> *Fully persuaded with respect to our Lord, that he was truly of the seed of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God according to the will and power of God.*
>
> Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Smyrnaeans* 1.1, around A.D. 107, on his way to be killed in Rome: the same confession, fifty years on

> *God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father … For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.*
>
> The Nicene Creed, A.D. 325 and 381: the same three moves, defended and not invented

TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE NEXT WEEK

1. Paul is introducing himself to strangers whose trust he needs and doesn't have. Why open with a creed instead of a credential? What does that assume about them?
2. For a thousand years, faithful people held God to his promise to David. What had he promised, and what thread were they still holding on to when 2 Kings ends?
3. The verb changes at Titus 2:11 from *came to be* to *appeared*. Before you read the next chapter, say what you think the difference is.

THE SENTENCE TO TAKE HOME

He came to be the Son of David. He was always the Son of God.

The first line is something that happened, with a date, an address and a mother. The second is who he was before the sentence ever began. Easter didn't make him the Son. It crowned him.

THE ONE THING I WOULD SAY TO SOMEBODY WHO ASKED

NEXT WEEK Titus 2, *Grace Has Appeared*. Three times he came to be. Then grace appeared.