

NBTS
099-17
MA

PAUL'S PRESENTATION OF
JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD:
A STUDY OF ROMANS 1:3-4 AND 8:29

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the
Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary
Ogbomoso, Nigeria

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in
Theological Studies

by
Clement Olubisi Ogunniyi

1999

ABSTRACT

The resurrection of Jesus Christ as discussed by Paul in Romans 1:3-4 and 8:29, has been a point of contention and debate among Christians and Muslims in particular. This thesis tries to address these important events in order to establish the authenticity of the discourse in relation to the assurance of eternal life for all Christians.

The methodology applied in this research is mainly library research as well as interview methods of looking at various contributors on the theme as mentioned above. In the findings Paul the apostle states that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a unique occurrence that establishes him as 'first-born' among the believers. Therefore, it is through genuine relationship with Jesus Christ that one enjoys the Fatherhood of God. Just as John 1:12 reads, "yet to all who received him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." This is what Paul meant in Romans 8:16-17, that "the Spirit himself testifies with our Spirit that we are God's children."

The argument and discussion affirm the fact that those who believe in Christ will resurrect and be co-heir with him in God's Kingdom eternally. The key

therefore to inherit the Kingdom of God is to hold faith
allegiance with Jesus Christ who died, resurrected and is
advocating for Christians in the right hand of God.

CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this study to explain in detail how the Son of God means kingship authority. This is established on the basis of the prophetic messages of both prophet Isaiah and angel Gabriel concerning the birth of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:32-33). The promise of a Messiah in the Old Testament was made to the heir of David. This makes Jesus qualified to be called a Son of David. In fact, Jesus has been the Son of God in power from eternity to eternity. This is what is revealed in his resurrection power.

Actually, there are three sections relating to the promises ascribed to David in the book of Acts: "those related to the Kingdom, to Jesus' resurrection and to the Gentiles."¹ The Davidic promises in the Epistle thus revealed two issues which are: the Davidic promises and the descent of Christ, as well as the Davicic promises and the Kingdom.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Roman Church told his recipients that God had chosen him to be an harbinger of his gospel promised in the past in the

¹Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., "The Davidic Covenant in Acts-Revelation," Bibliotheca Sacra, 151, January-March 1994, p. 71.

Scriptures. This gospel is about the Son of God who became man as an heir of David (Romans 1:3). Many thought that Paul was quoting from early Christian tradition in the sense that reference to Davidic Messiah was not popular in Paul's letters.²

That Jesus is the Son of God is clearly stated in Romans 1:4. This is in line with Matthew 22:41-46, Mark 12:35-37 and Luke 20:41-44 where it is said that the Messiah transcends mortal man (Romans 15:7-13). In the Messiah, the Son of David, both the believing Jews and Gentiles find hope in the present and the future.³ In other words, Paul is relating Jesus' resurrection to the prophetic promises to David, as recorded in Acts 13:35-37, saying that the covenant of God with David and authenticity of the Word of God becomes the biblical background for the resurrection.

Both Romans 8:28 and 29 are more or less Christian hymns of assurance. They have been ministering comfort and encouragement to the troubled as well as the afflicted minds from time to time. In verse 29, God's purpose is revealed concerning his fore-knowledge and fore-ordination of the saints.⁵

³Rogers, p. 78.

³Rogers, p. 79.

⁴Rogers, p. 80.

⁵D. Edmond Hiebert, "Romans 8:28-29 and the Assurance and the Believers," Bibliotheca Sacra, 148, No. 590, April-June 1991, p. 170.

Once again, physically, Jesus Christ was a descendant of David. This reference indicates that he was not just an ordinary Jew, but of royalhood. However, with the spirit of holiness, being resurrected from the dead, which is the peak of his career on this terrestrial ball, "Christ was designated Son of God." The relationship existing between Christ and God is revealed by the declaration of his Sonship.⁶

Besides, the phrase "Son of God" means Israel as a nation, or referred to the king who represents his people, as generally believed by the Jews.⁷

Also, Paul's message in Romans 8:28-29 reveals a "ringing Christian assurance to the believing heart; bringing peace, comfort and encouragement to the troubled and afflicted saints for many centuries now."⁸

The correct criterion for measuring maturity, in measuring human life as God wants it to be is clearly found in Jesus Christ. This is the standard set down for each follower of Christ to meet. "This is the fullness of Christ Himself." This simply means that in all his totality as man, he was gracious. "The fullness of Christ" means the fullness that belongs to Christ, all

⁶Edwin Cyril Blackman, "The Letter of Paul to the Romans," One Volume Commentary on the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), p. 770.

⁷Blackman, p. 771.

⁸Hiebert, "Romans 8:28-29," p. 179.

He is in humanity, with all the graces and qualities He possesses. He is the essence of perfect manhood.⁹ And the stature He attained in His incarnation, the spiritual maturity level He possessed, is the measure toward which every believer should be progressing.¹⁰ Believers' goal is nothing but becoming as perfect as He is. According to Richard L. Straus:

Becoming perfectly like Him is the believer's ultimate destiny. Nothing can deter him from reaching that goal for God has predestined him 'to become His conformed to the image of His Son' (Romans 8:29). That perfect transformation into Christ's image will occur when he enters His presence (I John 3:2). Meanwhile, there is no higher calling in life than to keep moving toward that goal.¹¹

God is not trying to create victorious Christian business tycoons who can impress the world with their wealth and plentifulness. Neither is he trying to parade prosperous church leaders who can influence people with their organizational and administrative proficiencies. Nor is he trying to parade great and eloquent speakers who can move people with their convincing speeches.¹² All He wants to create

in His followers is the character of His Son - His love, His kindness, His compassion, His holiness, His humility, His unselfishness, His servant attitude, His willingness to suffer wrongfully, His ability to forgive and so much more that characterized His life on earth.¹³

⁹Richard L. Straus, "Like Christ: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:12," Bibliotheca Sacra, 143, No. 571, July-September 1986, p. 264.

¹⁰Straus.

¹¹Straus.

¹²Straus.

¹³Straus.

The resurrection power of Jesus Christ is established in God Himself. Jesus resurrected from the dead in that the death is not potent enough to hold Him who is the Son of God (Matt. 23:31-32; Acts 2:24). Jesus was restored back to life by God Himself, hence granting Him His power (Romans 8:11). Both the pre-resurrection and the post-resurrection life of Christ could not be separated from his relationship to the Father. He was with the Father and the Father's authority belonged to Him. This is exactly what Jesus Christ asserted to His adherents on the resurrection morning, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). Jesus' "resurrection thus marked His passage way to his exaltation, a status he gained as" an indemnity "for his humility and obedience."¹⁴

The resurrection power of Jesus Christ also engenders joyful "and victorious living" for the saints.¹⁵ Their assurance of resurrection is rooted in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. Jesus' resurrection and power reassures the saints of their own resurrection. Laying hold to the authority of Christ calls for a steadfast belief in his Lordship. The conviction must

¹⁴B. Uche Enyioha, "The Resurrection Power of Christ and Its Implications for the Christian Life," OJOT, No. 4, December 1989, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵Enyioha, p. 8.