

The Gospel for which Paul was “set apart” proclaims the eternal Son of God humbling Himself by coming down to earth that He might bring us into the Son’s heavenly Kingdom and the eternal Age of the Holy Spirit. The resurrection proclaims this loudly!

1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 1:2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 1:3 concerning His Son, Who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 1:4 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...

He Was Declared The Son of God

- While Jesus’ lowliness (“born of a descendant of David according to the flesh”) is contrasted with His exaltation (“declared...with power by the resurrection from the dead”) Jesus is unchangeably God’s “Son” in 1:3 and “the Son of God” in 1:4. He doesn’t become the Son. He is always the Son.¹ What changes is His humiliation and exaltation.²

¹ Baptist preacher Hercules Collins (1646-1702) teaches it this way in his *Orthodox Catechism* (1680): Q.32. For what cause is Christ called the only begotten Son of God, when we also are the sons of God? A. Because Christ alone is the eternal and natural Son of the eternal Father, and we are but sons adopted of the Father by grace for His sake.

² We have this contrast in Philippians 2:5-11. The catechism of Baptist preacher Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) also teaches these biblical categories of Christ’s states:

Q. 31. Wherein did Christ’s humiliation consist? A. **Christ’s humiliation consisted in His being born**, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross, in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

- God’s Son is a title first assigned to Israel:
 - “...you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve Me’”’” (Exodus 4:22,23).
 - “...I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn” (Jeremiah 31:9).
 - “When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son” (Hosea 11:1).
 - This title identifies Jesus as the true Israel. All those united to Him by faith are the true covenant people of God, be they Jew or Gentile.

In Power

- A few English translations preserve the original order of the phrases in the Greek:
 - “...was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” (English Standard Version).
 - “...declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (King James Version).
- Think about this. God declared to all that Jesus was His Son with power by raising Him from the dead by the Holy Spirit (8:11). What is the only way this powerful proclamation of God is made known? By the witness of the apostles and our proclamation of that witness.³

Q. 32. Wherein consists Christ’s exaltation? A. **Christ’s exaltation consists in His rising again from the dead on the third day**, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

³ Notice the similarities between Romans 1:2-4 and Paul’s preaching in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch: “...God raised Him from the

READ 1 Corinthians 1:17-31. God displays this Christ-raising and Christ-proclaiming power through “*the foolishness of the message preached*” (1:21) by messengers who come “*in weakness and in fear and in much trembling*” (2:3)

- When God displays His power, it is to increase knowledge of Him:
 - The “*the gospel...is the power of God for salvation*” because “*in it the righteousness of God is revealed*” (1:16,17).
 - “*...since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made*” (1:20).
 - “*...the Scripture [in Exodus 9:16] says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth’*” (9:17).
 - This “*power*” finds its source in the Person of the Holy Spirit in believers’ lives on mission (15:13,19).
 - God’s exercise of His power never has us as the ultimate goal. The goal is always the revealing of His Son as God-King (1:4), His righteousness (1:16,17), His infinite power (1:20), His authority over even the powers of the world that deny Him (9:17), and His ability to save the nations through the

dead; and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus” (Acts 13:30-33). See also Luke 24:44-49; 1 Corinthians 15:4-8.

weakness of us, the Church (15:13,19). It’s about Him. His power is always displayed to reveal Him.

According to the Spirit of Holiness

- With this phrase, we are reminded that Paul presumes a God Who is Trinity, the doctrine that sets the God of the Bible (which the Church has confessed for 2,000 years) apart from any other religion in human history.⁴ While the statement isn’t as obvious as it is

⁴ Judaism holds to the confession that “Yahweh is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4), but fails to address the plurality in that one God (Genesis 1:26; Isaiah 6:8), and does not accept the three Persons described in the New Testament (remember, the Old Testament cannot be understood except by those who are in Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:14-16). The Qu’ran of the Muslims specifically condemns Trinitarian confession/faith: “O people of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of Allah aught but truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His Messengers. **Say not ‘Trinity.’ Desist: it will be better for you,** for Allah is One Allah. Glory be to him (for Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belongs all things in the heavens and on earth...**they disbelieve who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity,** for there is no god except One God. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them. Why turn they not to Allah and seek His forgiveness? For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Christ the son of Mary was no more than a Messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him...” (4:171; 5:72-74, Yusef Ali translation). The Mormons confess the three Persons to be three Gods (we confess there is only one God Who is three Persons), and the Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the eternal divinity of the Son and the Personhood of the Holy Spirit. Biblical and historical Christianity does not have the same God as other world religions. “*Their rock is not like our Rock*” (Deuteronomy 32:31)!

in Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14, Paul still weaves a witness to the three Persons of the one true God in this introduction:

- The Father is the “*God*” of the phrase “*His Son*” (1:3) and “*Son of God*” (1:4). He will be clearly identified as “Father” in 1:7; 6:4; 8:15; 15:6.
- The Son has been mentioned by this title, but also identified as “*Christ Jesus*” (1:1) and “*Jesus Christ our Lord*” (1:4).
- The Holy Spirit (“*the Spirit of holiness*”) is now introduced.⁵
- Paul seems to be paralleling “*according to the flesh*” (1:3) with “*according to the Spirit of holiness*” (1:4). “Just as ‘according to the flesh’ in verse 3 defines the phase which came to be through being born of the seed of David, so ‘according to the Spirit of holiness’ characterizes the phase which came to be through the resurrection.”⁶
- The Son is the only One Who gives the “*the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were to receive*” (John 7:39).⁷

⁵ The Holy Spirit is most prominent in chapter 8, but the letter to the Romans is filled with significant references to this Person of the one true God (5:5; 9:1; 14:17; 15:13,16,19,30).

⁶ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 11.

⁷ The Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, though they are different Persons. We see them separately in Trinitarian formulas (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14) and at the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:16//Mark 1:10//Luke 3:22//John 1:32). However, the Bible also has no problem saying, “*the Spirit of Christ*” (Romans 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11), “*the last Adam became a life-giving spirit*” (1 Corinthians 15:45) or “*the Lord is the Spirit...the Spirit of the Lord...the Lord, the Spirit*” (2 Corinthians 3:17,18), or “*Spirit of Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 1:19).

Resurrection from the Dead

- Jesus’ resurrection was a divine statement about His identity and the position to which the Father appointed Him. The apostle Peter makes a similar connection in his Pentecost sermon: “*Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear...therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:32,33,36). Jesus did not become “*both Lord and Christ*” at the resurrection, but God made these titles of the Son loudly proclaimed through the resurrection.

Jesus Christ Our Lord

Praise Him in Each Part of the Title!

- The full title here, “*Jesus Christ our Lord*,” comes climactically at the end of verse 4 in the Greek text and in most English translations.⁸
- “*Jesus*.” On the one hand, this is an exceedingly common name (a Greek form of the name Joshua, which means, “Yahweh saves”). It does, however, carry biblical-theological importance. “*An angel of the Lord*” explains its significance to Joseph in a dream: “*...you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:20,21). Jesus is the salvation of the LORD of the Old Testament for His people. Joshua, who led Israel into the Promised Land after the Exodus, was a picture of Jesus, Who

⁸ The H.C.S.B., K.J.V., N.C.V., among a few others, relocate the title to 1:3 for clarity.

leads His people into eternal life after delivering them from slavery to sin.⁹

- The title “*Christ*” (Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah”) links Jesus to the Old Testament promises of an anointed King. For important places this idea occurs in the O.T., see Psalm 2:1-7; 18:50; Isaiah 61:1,2.
- “*Our Lord.*” While “*Jesus*” identifies the Son as human, and “*Christ*” proclaims Him God’s chosen King, the title “*Lord*” labels Him as fully God:
 - “*And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD [יהוה, or “Yahweh”] will be delivered*” (Joel 2:32). When this passage is quoted in Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13 it is a reference to Jesus Christ.
 - “*Thus says the LORD [יהוה, or “Yahweh”], the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD [יהוה, or “Yahweh”] of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me’*” (Isaiah 44:6). In Revelation 1:17 the glorified Jesus tells the apostle John, “*I am the first and the last.*”
 - “*For thus says the LORD [יהוה, or “Yahweh”], Who created the heavens (He is the God Who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), ‘I am the LORD [יהוה, or “Yahweh”], and there is none else...there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word*

has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance” (Isaiah 45:1,21-23). Compare with Paul’s teaching on Christ: “*...at the name of Jesus every knee will bow...and...every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*” (Philippians 2:10,11).

The New Age Has Begun

- Christ has, in His humiliation (becoming human) and exaltation (resurrection and ascension), experienced the fulfillment of Old Testament promises and has ushered in the new covenant age.
- Paul makes constant use of the contrast between “*flesh*” (1:3) and “*Spirit*” (1:4).¹⁰ Here, in Jesus’ assuming the nature of the former age (“*flesh*”) and being resurrected according to the nature of the new age (“*Spirit*”), we are shown clearly the only means by which we may attain to the eternal age: union with Christ, Who has gone there before us and secured it for us in His death and resurrection.
- “Jesus had to take on flesh and enter into the old age in order to inaugurate the new age that is characterized by the Holy Spirit...when Jesus lived on earth as the Son of David, he lived his life in the old age of the flesh that was characterized by weakness, sin, and death. At his resurrection, however, Jesus left the old age behind and inaugurated the new age of the Spirit.”¹¹

⁹ The link between the names Jesus and Joshua is seen in Hebrews 4:8, where the K.J.V. renders the name “Jesus,” while most other translations render it “Joshua.”

¹⁰ Romans 7:5,6; 8:2-13; Galatians 3:3; 4:29; 5:16-18,19-24; 6:8; Philippians 3:4.

¹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 43-44.