

Text: Romans 1:3-4

Title: By the Resurrection from the Dead

Truth: The resurrection was God's way of designating Jesus to be the Son of God in power.

Date/Location: Resurrection Sunday April 17, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

Here is my translation of Rom 1:3-4, based on the NKJV:

1 Paul...separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son—who **became**¹ of the seed of David **according to the flesh**, 4 and **distinguished as** the Son of God with power **according to the Spirit of holiness**, by the resurrection from the dead— Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. Observations

A. Two perspectives: according to the flesh, according to the Spirit of holiness. If you only have one of those two perspectives, you are missing out a whole lot of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

1. According to the Flesh - a descendant of David

This takes us back to the OT to consider David's greater son. For example, 2 Samuel 7:16, Psalm 2:7.

This reminds us of the genealogies of Matthew 1 and Luke 3. He came in the flesh (1 John 4:2) and became flesh (John 1:14).

2. According to the Spirit – the Son of God with power

Remember Mark 1:1 – gospel of Jesus Christ, the **Son of God**.

And Luke 1:32-33: **Son of the Highest**, on David's throne

And John 1:1 – Jesus Christ our Lord "was GOD."

And John 20:31 – Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

The phrase "Son of God" means that Jesus is the same essence as God. He is of the "same stuff" as God is. He is neither

¹ Commonly translated "was born" but this is a stretch. The word is commonly *to be, become, come into being*. The Son pre-existed His humanity and added humanity to His deity. Thus he "became" flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

subordinate, nor has a beginning, nor is an offspring, nor is procreated. We can understand the relationship between God the Father and God the Son with the analogy of human fathers and children, but this analogy breaks down very easily.

- B. The Spirit of holiness is a fancy way of saying “Holy Spirit.”
- C. The translations here can be somewhat confusing: was Jesus “**made** of the seed of David” or “**born** of the seed of David” or just “a **descendant** of David?” Jesus was not “born” like every other human being was born. Mary indeed gave birth, but Jesus did not come about by normal human procreation because He already existed and was entering into humanity via virgin conception and birth—not becoming a new human like normally happens at conception. Anyway, this is Paul’s concise way of explaining correctly how Jesus came to be a descendant of David as far as His humanity was concerned, that is, according to the flesh.
- D. Some translations take the words “Jesus Christ our Lord” at the end of verse 4 and move them forward into verse 3 next to the word *Son* since they fit well there. I have left them at the end of verse 4 to reflect the Greek text better. I also set off the intervening words with long dashes to show what I think is the structure here.
- E. The verb I translated as *distinguished as* is the verb that is sometimes translated as *declared, appointed, designated, determined, fixed, demarcated, distinguished, or even marked off*. Think about that for a moment. What do you think most accurately conveys the truth Paul is trying to convey here? Is he saying:
1. The Son was **declared** (said) to be the Son? That is a useless declaration since the Son is already the Son. Also, the verb does not bear the meaning of “proclaimed to be” or “said to be.”
 2. The Son was **appointed** or **determined** to be the Son? This sounds suspicious because Christ did not become the Son at some point in the past. His personal relationship to the Father was always as Son (the Son of the Father, 2 John 3). But the nuance *appointed* works well if you take into account the rest of the verse, which we will in a moment.

3. The Son was **marked off** or **distinguished as** the Son of God? This is probably the best way to handle it (particularly without any further information). He was set apart from all others. It avoids the idea of adoptionism—Christ being adopted or otherwise entering into His sonship, when He *was* Son all along.

II. Son of God in Power

- A. But all that is incomplete without the rest of the phrase: He was distinguished or marked off—even appointed, as in “set in place”—as the Son of God **in power**. You see, the virgin birth is enough to demarcate Jesus as something special beyond special—even to set him off from the rest of humanity as the Son of God.
- B. But the resurrection does something even more than that. It distinguishes Him as the **Son-of-God-in-power**. The resurrection was a demarcation point—not that made the Son the Son, but it set up the reality that Jesus is now the Son of God in power. He is in a place of honor and authority that He did not have in His humiliation and servitude to the will of the Father on earth. God moved Him from suffering to glory; from weakness to absolute power (1 Cor. 15:42-43); from death to life; from humiliation to exaltation; from servant to king; from dying to reigning.
- C. The power inherent in God raising Him from the dead, and the physical, bodily resurrection resulting from that power, makes it clear that God indeed did in that act appoint or designate or demarcate Christ as the Son of God in power—not just as Son of God, but as Son of God in power. To Him has been given all authority (Matthew 28:18). He showed that power in the Transfiguration (Mark 9:1). He shared that power with His disciples so that they worked miracles as authenticating signs (Romans 15:19).
- D. People sometimes worry that Jesus is not “reigning” right at this moment. In fact He is—in His office as sovereign God in that behind-the-scenes way that God most often works. But in another way He is not reigning—in His office as mediatorial human king over the house of Israel on the throne of David, openly, for all the world to directly experience. He will do that later.

But this does not mean that Jesus is not exercising power *right now throughout the world*. In fact, He is—through the church and its ministry, and in the church and among its people. He is the head of the church, not just the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). Is this enough for you to acknowledge that He is exercising gospel power? He is in power over the world through the Word and Spirit in the church, and to convict of sin and righteousness and coming judgment (John 16:8-11). He is transforming lives one at a time, bringing them out of death into life, out of sin into righteousness, out of Adam into Christ.

Conclusion

Jesus is not presently hanging on a cross in weakness. He is not helplessly lifeless in a cave. He did not swoon and then die the death of a normal man. Instead, He died by crucifixion and was raised by the powerful working of God (Acts 2:24, 2:32, 3:15, 3:26, 4:10, 5:30, 10:40, 13:30, 13:33, 13:37, 26:8; Romans 7:4, 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14, 15:15; Gal. 1:1; 1 Peter 1:21).

He is “in power” in a new office, sitting at the right hand of God awaiting His enemies to be made His footstool (Heb 10:13). Meanwhile, He is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22, 5:23, Col. 1:18) and reigns as God, the sovereign potentate over all things.

Those people who are “in Christ” by faith will likewise be raised up with Him physically (2 Cor. 4:14) just as we were spiritually (Col. 2:12, 3:1). We have that certain hope because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).

He was crucified in weakness, but He lives by the power of God (2 Cor. 13:4). He is not the Son of God in weakness—He is the Son of God in power! We are partners with Him and have access to His power. We know He has it, because He was raised from the dead directly to that place of power, by the power of God that works in us who believe (2 Cor. 4:7, Eph. 3:20). With that power we can give testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:33). We can know the power of his resurrection. And we know that the second death has no power over those who believe!