

The Son of God (part 2)

Why does the Bible have to address Christ as the Son of God? Some people think that 'Son of God' is a title of God and thus, use it to prove that Jesus is God. As a result, Jesus has become 'God the Son' which was equal to 'God the Father'. Is such an understanding in line with the biblical teaching?

Why does the Bible have to address Christ as the Son of God? To answer this question, we need to return to the Old Testament. The Book of Acts has quoted Psalm 2 several times to prove that Jesus is Christ. Psalm 1 is like a proclamation of Christ, who is resolved to follow Yahweh God's path. Psalm 2 is talking about how God exalted His Christ (the anointed one).

Ps 2:1-3

Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!"

Let's first understand some basic vocabularies. The word, 'Christos', is a Greek word which is the Hebrew equivalence of 'Messiah'. The direct translation of 'Messiah' is 'the anointed one', which refers to the saviour who was chosen and sent to save the people of the world. Hence, the 'anointed one' in Psalm 2 is referring to the 'Messiah'.

Notice that in v2, God and His anointed one were mentioned at the same time; resisting His anointed one is resisting God. No wonder

that the Book of Revelation mentioned two thrones in the end. Who are the ones that sit on these two thrones? It's God and His anointed one (the Lamb). Those who do not understand would regard Jesus as another God. Notice that it says in Psalms here, 'resisting Yahweh and His anointed one', Yahweh God and His Christ are together, just as Jesus said, 'I and the Father are one'. Jesus was not proclaiming himself as God. He was telling the Jews that he and the Father were united, such that resisting him was resisting the Father; receiving him was receiving the Father.

Ps 2:4

He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them.

Who is 'seated in the heavens'? Of course, it is Yahweh God. The word 'Lord' (*Adonai*) in Hebrew refers to Yahweh God.

Ps 2:6

But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.

V6 was spoken by Yahweh God, the one who sits in heaven because v5 says that He was going to show His anger, which was then followed by 'I have already installed my king upon Zion, My holy mountain.' Who was this king? This is the focus of Psalm 2, which is this 'anointed one'. Yahweh God proclaimed here that He had already installed a king on Mount Zion.

Ps 2:7

The Anointed one said, "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord : He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.

God called His anointed one as *'My Son'*, that is *'the Son of God'*. This is the Old Testament's reference which puts an equal sign between *'Christ'* and *'the Son of God'*. That was why the Jews would regard Christ as the Son of God; such that whoever called himself as the Son of God was proclaiming that he was Christ. ***(NB: I am referring to the specific meaning and definition of the term 'Son of God', not in the broad sense of the term.)***

Such then, what does 'I have begotten you' mean? Which day was 'today' referring to? It was the day when Yahweh God installed him as king. This is because v6 is a proclamation. 'Today' was the day when He 'installed him as king'. We have to refer to the context overall. To put it simply, the Son of God is the Christ (the anointed one), which is the king installed by God. And this king has a responsibility and that is, to execute judgment. Hence, Psalm 2 talks about judgment and that is the task that God commissioned the anointed one to execute.

Ps 2:8-9

'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'

Here, we see that the anointed one is not on equal standing with Yahweh God. Now, we can understand the words of the New Testament. For example, in **1 Co 15:27**, Paul said, ***'For He has put all things in subjection under his feet...'***. Similarly, it says in **Ps 2:8** here that ***God has given the nations to Christ as his inheritance and that he had to judge them with a rod of iron.*** God

has given him the authority above all so that he could rule and judge the nations.

Rev 2:26-27

He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father.

Who is speaking in v26? Referring to the text before it, v18 says that it is spoken by the Son of God. Is not the content of **Rev 2:26-27** very similar to that of **Ps 2:8-9**? Very similar indeed! However, this time in Revelation, it was spoken by the Son of God, Christ. To whom was Christ speaking? It was to those Christians who had overcome. What has this got to do with Psalms?

Rev 2:26 has already said that Christ would be imparting the power he received from the Father to the Christians who overcome. Notice that there is a condition in v26: *'He who overcomes, and he who keeps my deeds until the end'*. Christ's victory is closely relevant to us; what God has given to Christ will also be given to us in future because we are united as one with Christ. To put it simply, Psalm 2 has explained why Christ (the anointed one) is called the Son of God.

Let's see how the apostles understood Psalm 2.

Ac 4:24-28

And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit,

through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things? 'The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.' For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

This was the apostles' understanding: the anointed one in Ps 2 was Jesus and that they had all witnessed the fulfillment of Ps 2. This was because not only the Israeli ruler was against Jesus, but also the Gentile ruler. This was the apostles' understanding of Ps 2.

Ac 13: 33

That God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten you.'

Now, can you understand the meaning of 'today I have begotten you'? Which day is 'Today' specifically referring to? It's the day of Jesus' resurrection. Why? When did God install him as king? It's after he gained victory. That's why Jesus had to undergo testing while he was in the world. He did not become king at birth; Jesus had to prove that he was worthy.

'Today I have begotten you' refers to the resurrection. Why? That is because on that day, God publicly proclaimed and testified that He had already installed Jesus as Lord, as the Judge. That is the king that Yahweh installed on Mount Zion. Therefore, Jesus'

resurrection was very important. It was to prove to those above and below that God had already installed him as King and Judge. From the Book of Acts, we can see that the apostles had never regarded Jesus as God. Let's look at **Ac 13:34**.

As for the fact that He raised him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'

Here, it has once again emphasized that it was God who raised Jesus from the dead which meant that it was God who installed Jesus as King. We must see this point clearly and learn to grasp and understand gradually because it has to do with how we can preach the truth accurately as servants of God. Otherwise, the Gospel you preach would be confusing: asking people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God as well as Christ but in the end, the Son of God had become God such that people still have to believe that Jesus was God. Such a mess was created by the Gentiles. The Jews would not make such a mistake.

The spiritual obstacle of the Jews was the inability to see that Jesus was Christ, the Son of God. Now, the Gentile believers have introduced another unnecessary obstacle and that is, to ask them to believe that Jesus is 'God'. Can you imagine the degree of difficulty? In any case, such an impossible obstacle was created by us, Gentiles. In the future, we will all have to be answerable to God for this mistake. As servants of God, we really have to read the Bible properly and understand it accurately so that we can preach the Gospel correctly.

Why does the Bible need to emphasize that Jesus is the Son of God? Of course, it is, on one hand, to emphasize his intimate relationship with God, like Father and Son. Another point is because God wants us to imitate Jesus to be a real son of God. This point you must be clear. On a broad sense, we are all sons of God. However, you have to ask yourself: What kind of a son am I?

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32) talks about two kinds of sons or it should be three kinds: the first kind was the elder son, the second kind was the son before repentance and the third kind was the son after repentance. There are many kinds of sons. The elder son in the parable was the religious kind, prim and proper, no drinking and no womanizing. However, his relationship with the father was very cold and was based on benefits: *“I have served you for so many years, what have you given me?”* That was a transactional relationship. The younger son before repentance was wilful; taking his father’s kindness for granted. It was his father who was indebted to him instead of him being indebted to his father’s love. However, after repentance, this young son has become the true son. With humility, he saw himself as the father’s servant.

The Parable of the two sons (Mt 21:28-32) talks about two kinds of sons. One kind entertained the father with lip service. Whatever he was asked to do, he would say ‘sure, I would do so’ but nothing came through after that. The other one would openly rebel and said, ‘Ask me to work? No, I won’t do it!’ Yet, he repented after that and did it right away.

There are many kinds of sons; the question is which kind are you? The Book of Genesis recorded a few sons who lost their birthrights

due to their rebellion and contempt for God. Hence, do not think that we could be willful and be fearful of nothing just because we have the title of being the sons of God. The Bible calls Jesus Christ the Son of God is to ask us to imitate him as our example (Ro 8:29); to imitate his submission to God and obedience to God's will. Only by doing so, can we call upon our Father with a clear conscience and build an intimate relationship with our Father God.

Author: Zhang Cheng