

The God who is over all and be blessed forever

(Romans 9:5)

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Ro 9:5, according to *Chinese Union Bible version*, is as follows:

列祖就是他们的祖宗，按肉体说，基督也是从他们出来的，他是在万有之上，永远可称颂的神。阿们！ (*The patriarchs are their ancestors. According to the flesh, Christ is from them, he is above all, the God that is blessed forever.*)

It seems very obvious from the above verse that Christ is above all and that he is the God that is blessed forever. Looking at this verse, we have no choice but to admit that Jesus Christ is God. Therefore, this verse has become the most persuasive biblical evidence to prove that Jesus was God.

Yet, what many Christians do not know is that the meaning of this verse in the original Greek language is not very clear. This has made translation of this verse very difficult. Many translators could only translate it according to their own interpretation. We only need to refer to a few translations and we will know how difficult it is to want to understand this verse correctly.

We can consider two different English translation versions first:

English Standard Version (ESV): To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. (列祖是他们的，按肉体说，基督也是从他们出来的，他是在万有之上的神，永远可称颂的。阿们！)

Revised Standard Version (RSV): To them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen. (列祖是他们的，按肉体说，基督也是从他们出来的。神是在万有之上，永远可称颂的。阿们！)

These two versions have very obvious differences. According to the ESV translation, Jesus Christ is the God who is above all and

blessed forever. RSV has, however, separated Christ from God using the punctuation of a ‘full-stop’, such that the God that is above all is not Christ. We can see how the English versions have two entirely different translations. Which version is the correct translation then?

The Chinese versions also share the same problem. We can refer to the Revised Chinese Union Version published in 2010. It is not a new version but one that has made revisions to the Chinese Union Version, which has corrected some errors in the translation. We can compare the translation of Ro 9:5 in these two versions:

列祖是他们的，基督按肉体说也是从他们出来的。愿在万有之上的上帝被称颂，直到永远。阿们！（和合本修订版）
The patriarchs are theirs, according to the flesh, are also from them. May the God who is above all be blessed forever. Amen! (Revised Chinese Union Version)

列祖就是他们的祖宗，按肉体说，基督也是从他们出来的，他是在万有之上，永远可称颂的神。阿们！（和合本）
The patriarchs are their chiefs, according to the flesh, Christ was also from them. He is above all, the God who is blessed forever. Amen! (Chinese Union Version)

We can also refer to the *Contemporary Chinese Version*. Its translation is appended below:

“他们是族长们的子孙，按照身世说，基督跟他们是同一族的。愿那统治万有的上帝〔或译：愿基督，就是那统治万有的上帝〕永远得到颂赞，阿们！”

They are the children of the chiefs of the race, according to the flesh, Christ and they are of the same race. May the God who reigns over all (or also translated as: May Christ, who is the God who reigns over all) be blessed forever, Amen!]

The *Contemporary Chinese version* has suggested two entirely different translations:

- 1) May the God who reign over all be blessed forever, Amen!
- 2) May Christ, who is the God who reigns over all be blessed forever, Amen!

The two translations of the *Contemporary Chinese Version* are totally different. The first translation separates the two sentences with a full-stop, with which separates the word ‘Christ’ and ‘God’. The emphasis is, “*May the God who reigns above all (not Christ) be blessed forever*”. But the second translation emphasizes that ‘*Christ is the God who reigns above all*’ and Christ is God!.

So was God or Christ the one whom Paul blessed? Or it was both? Or he was saying that Christ was God and God was Christ? Readers are at a loss in face of such a confusion in the translation and ambiguity.

We can take reference from another Chinese translated version - *Lu Zhenzhong's* translation:

“列祖是他们的；上帝所膏立者基督肉身上也是由他们而出的：那在万有之上的（有数译法，今再取其一：『他在万有之上』）上帝是当被祝颂，万世无穷的。阿们（即：『诚心所愿』的意思）。”

This translation has proposed two versions. One of them is as follows,

“The patriarchs are theirs; the Christ whom God has anointed is also physically from them: the God that is over all should be blessed, forever more. Amen.”

Lu has clearly distinguished God from Christ, that Christ was the one God anointed and he had unambiguously added after the punctuation ‘:’, “*the God that is over all should be blessed...*”. According to this translation, Paul had counted God’s graciousness bestowed upon Israel in v4-5 and thus the blessings to God was offered from the depth of the heart.

The other translation proposed by this translation, which is in the parenthesis, is:

“The patriarchs are theirs and Christ whom God has anointed was from them in the flesh: He is over all, God is to be blessed and blessed forever. Amen.”

Who is ‘*He*’ who is over all? It seems to be referring to Christ because the text preceding it is talking about Christ, yet the text after it is talking about God who is to be blessed. Based on the second version of the translation, we can at the most conclude that Christ is over all and that God is to be blessed. This translation, unlike the one by the Chinese Union version, has referred Christ as God. Nevertheless, both of ***Lu Zhenzhong’s*** translations have differentiated God and Christ clearly, and both have emphasized that God is to be blessed”.

As long as there are differences between versions of translations, we have to study the correct meaning of the passage in greater details. Such studies are not as difficult as you may imagine. The key is that you must be equipped with the Bible Study tools. ***The Strong Numbers New Testament*** is a very important Bible reference tool. Even if you do not know Greek, you can use the reference tool to find the correct answer if you know how to use it. We can focus on the phrase ‘*God that is to be blessed forever*’. Turn to the reference and check the word for ‘to be blessed’ (*eulogetos*) and see how it is used. This adjective, *eulogetos*, has been used 8 times (including the occurrence in Ro 9:5), which means ‘*to be blessed*’, ‘*to be praised*’.

1) Mk 14:61

But he kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning him, and saying to him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” [NASB]

Who is *'the Blessed One'* ? The Jews dared not mention the name of God; that was why the high priest had to address the only true God, Yahweh, as *'the Blessed One'* which is actually another title of God.

The high priest asked Jesus whether he was the son of the Blessed One, which was in fact, interrogating him on whether he was declaring himself as the *'Son of God'*, that is, Christ. The Jews hated Jesus and even wanted to kill him, not because Jesus declared himself as God (*Jesus had never made such a proclamation*), but it was because they thought that he considered himself extraordinary as the Son of God (*Christ*).

2) Lk 1:68

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people. [NASB]

Who is the one to be blessed? It is the God of Israel. The *'Lord'* here is not referring to Jesus Christ because the original sentence of the Hebrew Bible says "*Yahweh יהוה, the God of Israel is to be blessed*" (cf: *1Sam 25:32; 1Kgs 1:48; 8:15; 2Chron 2:12; 6:4; Psa 41:13; 106:48*). Let's read ***Psa 72:18***.

Blessed be the LORD יהוה God, the God of Israel, who alone works wonders. [NASB]

The Bible called us to bless the God of Israel, Yahweh, because He alone works wonders. He did not only save the people of Israel, He had also saved us through Jesus Christ. Only Yahweh God is worthy of our blessing. Besides Him, there is no God and there is no god that is at equal status as Him.

3) Ro 1:25

For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. [NASB]

Who is the Lord who is blessed forever? It is the Lord of Creation, Israel's God Yahweh. *2 Chron 2:12* has precisely said this:

“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has made heaven and earth...”

What does it mean by only Yahweh is blessed? Paul has already made an explanation that blessing Yahweh is to worship and serve (**Greek: *latreuo***) Yahweh only. The Lord Jesus had also taught us the same thing in *Mt 4:10*, “*Worship the Lord your God and serve (*latreuo*) only*”. This verse is originated from *Deut 6:13*, “*You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.*”

The Lord Jesus had stated his stance clearly in *Mt 4:10* that he would serve Yahweh God only! He also wanted us to imitate him: To worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only. The ‘Lord’ here refers to Yahweh God, not Jesus (*cf. Deut 6:13*). We can see how the emphasis in the Old Testament and that of the New Testament is consistent, that Yahweh is our God and we only bless (*worship and serve*) Him!

4) 2 Cor 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. [NASB]

‘Praise’ and ‘Bless’ are translated from the same Greek word which is an adjective. Hence, this verse can also be translated as

‘Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.’ In the heart of Paul, who is the one that is to be praised? That is the God and Father of Jesus Christ. He is also our God and our Father.

5) 2 Cor 11:31

The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.[NASB]

Paul described God as the one *‘that is blessed forever’* which is exactly the same description as the one in *Ro 9:5*. It is obvious here that he was not attributing the description of ‘Blessed forever’ to Jesus Christ because Paul called the God who is blessed forever as *“the Father God of the Lord Jesus Christ”*. He is the God of Jesus Christ, the only God of Israel!

6) Eph 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ [NASB]

This verse can also be translated as this: *“the Father God of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be blessed, He had given us all kinds of spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ.”*

Whom should we bless? The Father God of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul’s words were very clear: Father God of the Lord Jesus Christ – the only true God Yahweh is the object of our blessings.

Why do we only bless the Father God of the Lord Jesus Christ? It is because He had given us all kinds of spiritual blessings in Christ. Paul, in *vs 4-14*, had mentioned a series of blessings that Yahweh God had bestowed upon us through Christ: holiness, sonship, glory, redemption, inheritance, etc. All these blessings are given to us by

God in Christ. He is the source and chief planner of our salvation, hence, we should bless Him only.

Paul in *Ro 9: 4-5* counted the blessing that Yahweh God bestowed upon Israel: sonship, glory, covenant, laws, promises, devout fathers and even Christ was raised from among them. Despite the fact that Paul was very heavy at heart at that time, he could not help but bless God from his heart when he recalled all the graciousness given to Israel by God. Lastly, let us see how Peter described it.

7) 1 Pt 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead [NASB]

The words of the apostles are unanimous; that the object of our blessing is the Father God of the Lord Jesus Christ (*not Jesus*), because it was He who raised Jesus Christ from death (*Jesus did not rise up on his own accord.*) (*Ac 3:15; 4:10; 13:30, 34; 17:31; Ro 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12; Heb 13:20*), and accomplished our salvation through Jesus Christ and regenerated us. He is our God, our Father, the object of our blessing.

This is what the Gospel says and so did the apostles; we can see that the Bible is consistent throughout. The ***Chinese Union Bible*** addressed Jesus Christ as '*the God who is to be blessed forever*' (*Ro 9:5*) is obviously not in line with the Biblical teaching. It is no wonder that the ***Revised Chinese Union Version*** has made revision to the translation of this verse. Regrettably, the majority of Christians is familiar with the ***Chinese Union Version*** without knowing that its translation is not reliable.

Lu Zhenzhong translated version suggested two types of

translations that are in fact very close in their original meaning. Both translations have differentiated God from Christ and unanimously stressed that *God in Heaven is to be blessed, forever more*'. This is in line with the conclusion of our study so far.

Undeniably, the meaning of the verse in *Ro 9:5* is not clear. Such a problem arise due to the absence of punctuation in the early handwritten manuscripts (See details in *Appendix*). Nevertheless, to the early church, the meaning of the verse was not ambiguous at all. It was because under the context of the Jewish monotheism, Yahweh is the only true God, only He would be worthy of our blessings, with no shadow of doubt.

The Trinitarian teaching has made this verse ambiguous. Since the Trinitarian teaching teaches that Jesus was God, Jesus would naturally become the recipient of the blessing and praises and have even unconsciously replaced the position of Yahweh God completely. This is precisely the consequence brought by the wrong translation of the Chinese Union Version. It has replaced the position of Yahweh God with Jesus, making Jesus the target/recipient of our worship and blessing.

Nevertheless, we can still use the study of this adjective '*to be blessed*' to find out the real meaning of the verse. Through the study above, we already have sufficient evidence to show that Jesus Christ is not the one to be blessed. The Bible and the apostles had unanimously called us to bless Yahweh God because He has "***blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ***" (*Eph 1:3*). Yahweh God is the Father of all lights, the source of ***every good thing and every perfect gift from above*** (*Jas 1:17*). Hence, we should bless Him alone!

**“The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock;
And exalted be God, the rock of my salvation”**

(2 Sam 22:47)