

## Paul and Crucifixion of the Christ

### Key passages

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom - **for I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified**. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. (1 Cor 2:1-5)

What is significant about Paul's use of the term Christ, crucified (crucified messiah)?

How does this differ from other messianic proclamations, both Jewish and Christian?

Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and **was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead**, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. (Rom 1:1-6)

Paul's opening in Romans is unique (for Paul), emphasising the Jewish heritage of Jesus and that of the gospel message. Note the emphasis is on Jesus' resurrection as the declaration of his identity as God's agent.

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: **Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ**. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet; and the last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1 Cor 15:20-25)

In what way is Christ's death and resurrection seen as eschatological?

In Jewish thought, resurrection is an eschatological event; in the nascent Christian kerygma, Jesus' resurrection is a portent of the general resurrection.

"Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36; cf. 4:10)

*For the first Christians, Jesus' resurrection was seen as vindication of Jesus' messianic status. The cross itself may not have played such a central role in early Christian proclamation – some Christians, even in Paul's time, seemed unwilling to speak of the cross...*

Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. (Phil 3:17-18)

Who were the enemies of the cross at Philippi?

Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches. (2 Cor 11:23-28)

Why does Paul detail his hardships here?

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so much for nothing?—if it really was for nothing. Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? (Gal 3:1-5)

From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body. (Gal 6:17)

What does Paul mean by the “mark” (stigmata) of Jesus?

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it... So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin. (Rom 7:14-18; 25)

How does Paul use the motif of slavery to explain his experience of conversion/transformation?

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law... I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing. (Gal 2:15-21)

Why did Paul oppose the continuing validity of the Jewish Law for converts to Jesus Movement?