

Servant, or Son (Acts 3:13, 26)

13 January 2015

In studying the passage for last week's message, I noticed a difference in wording between the NKJV and the KJV in Acts 3:13 and 26. (You may have noticed it while we were reading on Sunday, as well.) In both instances, the translators of the NKJV refer to Jesus as God's *Servant*, while the translators of the KJV chose the word *Son*. This caused me to wonder, "Well, which is it, Servant, or Son?" For anyone interested, what follows is a summary of what a little studying revealed to me...

It should be noted first of all that the reason the NKJV says *Servant* and the KJV says *Son* is NOT because they were considering two different Greek words. Since the same Greek text underlies both the NKJV and the KJV in the NT, what we're dealing with is a translational choice, not a textual one.

There is a Greek word that is used over 380 times in the NT that is almost always translated "son" – that is the word *huios*. (The KJV translates it "son(s)" 330 times and "children" 47 times. The NKJV translates it "son(s)" 360 times and "children" 14 times.)

Interestingly, *huios* is NOT the word that is used in Acts 3:13 and 26. Instead, the Greek word in both verses (and in both translations) is *pais*. This word is used much less frequently in the NT – 24 times. While it is translated in other places as son, child, children, young man, men (or male) servants, etc., both the NKJV and the KJV more often than not prefer to translate the word as "servant" (14 times in the NKJV and 10 times in the KJV).

Since the word *pais* may legitimately be translated as either "son" or "servant", and since both the NKJV and KJV use both words to do so, the question becomes, is one or the other *definitively correct, or wrong*, in Acts 3:13, 26?

We know that Jesus is, obviously, God's Son, so to say "his Son Jesus" (as the KJV does) is certainly correct.

At the same time, in Isaiah 42:1 we see a prophecy of Jesus Christ where God refers to Him as "My Servant" in both the NKJV and KJV. Additionally, when Matthew quotes this OT passage in his Gospel (Mt. 12:18), he uses the word *pais*, which both the NKJV and KJV translate as "servant". To say, then, "his Servant Jesus" (in Acts 3:13, 26) would certainly be a correct rendering.

Finally, I see nothing in the context of Acts 3:13 and 26 that demands the choice of "servant" or "son", that is one over the other. There is never a question, in

either the NKJV or KJV, as to the person being referenced – it is Jesus! In the context Peter is not making a point to describe Jesus as either a Son or a Servant. The fact of the matter is, either “title” is acceptable and neither changes our understanding of the person of Jesus in relation to the rest of the passage.

So, in Acts 3:13 and 26 is Jesus God’s Servant, or Son? Comparing Scripture with Scripture yields a resounding: YES!

By the way, would you also be considered a *son* and *servant* of God? I hope you could answer with a resounding: YES!