

**RE-INTERPRETING LUKE 4:16-21 IN THE CONTEXT
OF THE NIGERIAN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES'
UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS AS LIBERATOR**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined the biblical and historical roots of the theology of liberation in a selected number of Pentecostal Churches in contemporary Nigeria. It investigated the origin, growth, and phenomenon of liberation theology, and evaluated its impact on contemporary Christianity. This was with a view to assessing the role and contributions of the deliverance ministers in Nigerian Pentecostal Churches.

The methodology adopted consisted of the exegesis of Luke 4:16-21 and the historical-critical analysis of the text using Reader-Response Criticism (RRC). The meaning of liberation in the context of the New Testament in relation to the Old Testament messianic prophecies was analysed using Lucan theology in the cited passage to evaluate the apparent deviations of the Nigerian Pentecostal Churches from the established norms of the main Churches. The methodology also consisted of historical-critical evaluation and participant-observation of the Nigerian Pentecostal Church worship. Interviews were conducted with leaders in four selected Pentecostal Churches namely the Calvary Advocate Ministry, Valley of Solution Pentecostal Church, Christ's Freedom Pentecostal Church, and Faith and Healing Pentecostal Church. A questionnaire was also administered on five hundred purposively selected Church members to gather information about the doctrinal emphases and practices of Nigerian Pentecostal Churches as follows – fifty women, twenty men and seventy youths from Calvary Advocate Ministry; eighty women, forty men and ninety youths from the Valley of Solution Pentecostal Church.; twenty women, fifteen men, and twenty youths from Christ's Freedom Pentecostal Church; and forty women, twenty men and thirty youths from Faith and Healing Pentecostal Church.

The results showed that the Old Testament focused on the political liberation of the Israeli nation from the Babylonian and Medo-Persian captivity and later from Roman oppression. In contrast, the New Testament concentrated on liberation from sin so that human beings could serve God appropriately. It was revealed that the leaders of the selected Nigerian Pentecostal Churches had abandoned the holistic interpretation of the New Testament meaning of liberation in relation to the Old Testament messianic prophecies. Rather, they emphasized liberation from economic deprivation, material inadequacies, diseases, political tyranny, and spiritual oppression. It was discovered that the Lucan theology in the cited passage, which was anchored in liberation from sin in order to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God, had been de-contextualised and reinterpreted to formulate a Christology that was geared towards liberation from poverty, diseases, and political oppression so that human beings could live happily on earth. Christ was reduced to a saviour whose mission on earth was to help his followers attain long life and prosperity in the world.

The thesis concluded that the Nigerian Pentecostal Churches placed greater emphasis on the problems of their congregations more than the biblical injunctions.