

Who was Jesus of Nazareth?

**1. Introduction. Cautions
about Expectations and
Presuppositions of Jesus'
Divinity and Humanity**

What is Christology?

Jesus' followers called him the Messiah

Messiah = "the anointed one"

Christos = Greek for Messiah

"Christology" is the study of:

- who was Jesus?
- what role did he play in the God's divine plan?

Church's Understanding of Jesus

325 AD: Council of Nicaea

451 AD: Council of Chalcedon

Jesus:

- fully God and fully Human
- equal to God the Father
- existed from all eternity

Church's Understanding of Jesus

We believe this 4th century understanding was a divine revelation about Jesus

It does not mean early believers fully comprehended this revelation

Christian religious understanding, like any human understanding, developed and grew

Church's Understanding of Jesus

“Like most who study the NT intensively, I think that the sayings and deeds of Jesus reported in the Gospels have been influenced by hindsight after the resurrection. They have also picked up expansive interpretations in the course of being preached, as the traditions about Jesus were adapted to different audiences over a period of 30 to 70 years. At a final stage, they were reorganized by the individual evangelists to fit into an overall view of Christ that each wished to present.”

- Father Raymond Brown

Questions in Christology

How much self-awareness did Jesus have of who he was? How much did he know?

What is the evidence in the scriptures of Jesus' divinity? What kind of divine powers did he show?

What is the evidence in the scriptures of Jesus' humanity? What human limitations did he display?

How did Jesus' followers reflect on him? How did they grow in their understanding?

Why Study Christology?

1. “Christian believers whose spiritual lives should be shaped by the Master, if they have not wrestled in some mature way with the identity of Jesus, are in danger of constructing a fictional Jesus and attempting to get guidance from him.”
2. “they should be offered the opportunity to see that a nonliteralistic approach to the NT does not necessarily destroy or undermine classic Christian beliefs.”

Why Study Christology?

The debate over these questions by both believers and non-believers is all around us:

3. “to understand the issues and why there is a debate, and thus gain the biblical background to read further and reflect with discrimination on modern proposals.”

Different Kinds of Christology

Low Christology – evaluation of Jesus in terms that do not *necessarily* include divinity

- Messiah, Rabbi, Prophet, High Priest, Savior, Master

High Christology – “evaluation of Jesus in terms that include *an aspect* of divinity”

- Lord, Son of God, God

Different Kinds of Christology

Example High vs. Low Christology:

Luke 1:35 and 3:22. An angel and a heavenly voice proclaim Jesus the *Son of God*

Luke 7:16: Jesus resuscitates the son of the widow of Nain, and the people glorify Jesus, saying “A great *prophet* has arisen among us.”

Different Kinds of Christology

“an aspect of divinity:” different possibilities in understanding Jesus’ divinity:

differences in degree:

- lower than God, like an angel
- equal to God

differences in manner:

- made divine at some point in his career (eg. baptism, resurrection)
- divine all this life (conceived as a divine being)
- a divine being before he took on flesh
 - first born of all creation (Col 1:15)
 - uncreated with the Father

Approaches to Christology

Christology =

Who was Jesus?

What was his role in the divine plan?

Initial Questions:

1. How did Jesus evaluate his “christology?”
2. How did Jesus’ followers – in particular, the writers of the NT – evaluate his “christology?”

Follow-up Questions:

3. Is there a *difference* between (1.) and (2.)?
4. If there is a difference, is there still a *continuity* between (1.) and (2.)?

Approaches to Christology

Classification:

Nonscholarly Conservatism

Nonscholarly Liberalism

Scholarly Liberalism

Scholarly (Moderate) Conservatism

based on:

3. Is there a *difference* between (1.) and (2.)?

4. If there is a difference, is there still a *continuity* between (1.) and (2.)?

Approaches to Christology

Nonscholarly Conservatism

There is *no difference* between (1.) and (2.)
Even though the gospels were written 30-70
years after Jesus, the gospels are
assumed to be *verbatim* accounts of what
Jesus said

The view of most Christians until 1700's,
when historical criticism of the NT began
Includes “fundamentalism” – a radical
rejection of all biblical criticism.

Approaches to Christology

Nonscholarly Liberalism

There is *no continuity* at all between (1.) and (2.)

NT writers distorted Jesus, mistakenly calling him divine

“Nonscholarly,” based on:

- “scholars are saying such things”
- “nobody believes that anymore”

Often fueled by sensational reporting:

- “latest discovery” from the Dead Sea Scrolls
- “real Jesus” revealed in some apocryphal gospel

Includes: Thomas Jefferson

Approaches to Christology

Scholarly Liberalism

There is *no continuity* between (1.) and (2.)
Jesus' followers imposed divinity on him;
modern scholarship can tease out the
“real Jesus”

Based on:

- theories of a linear growth of Christian thought through different NT communities (Gentiles imposed divinity on Jesus via Greco-Roman religious mythology in order keep its memory of him alive)
- apocryphal gospels, reconstructed “Q”

Includes: J.D. Crossan and B. Mack

Approaches to Christology

Scholarly (Moderate) Conservatism

There *is* a *difference* between (1.) and (2.),
but there *is also continuity* between (1.)
and (2.)

Two forms:

“Explicit Christology:” Jesus himself
used titles suggesting divinity

“Implicit Christology:” titles of divinity
were added by NT writers, but Jesus’
actions and attitudes *implied* divinity

Approaches to Christology

Scholarly (Moderate) Conservatism

“Explicit Christology” got new life in the late 20th century:

Titles “Son of Man,” and “Messiah” were previously known to be present in Jewish circles at the time of Jesus. Qumran discoveries: titles “Lord” and “Son of God” also prevalent

Previous “liberal” theories of a linear growth of Christian thought found to be simplistic:

- various groups of Jewish Christians and Gentiles Christians existed; some with high; some with low “Christologies.”

Cautions About Expectations and Presuppositions (Biases)

Attitudes that deny or underplay the divine
in Jesus

Attitudes that limit the humanity of Jesus

Attitudes that Deny or Underplay the Divine in Jesus

“Could not have” biases

- starting with a rejection of anything “supernatural:” hence: miracles, foretelling future had to be later accretions

“Must have” biases

- starting with assumptions of what being human must imply
 - eg. must have had sexual temptations, or even sexual relations with a woman (usually Mary Magdalene)
 - eg. must have sinned

Attitudes that Limit the Humanity of Jesus

“Must have” biases

starting with assumption: “One cannot deny to Christ any perfection that is was possible for him to have had.”
(Jesus must have been the greatest philosopher, mathematician, doctor. . . etc)

- (Contradicts Hebrews 4:15)

starting with assumption: Jesus had the “beatific vision” and “unlimited knowledge” because he was God.

Cautions About Expectations and Presuppositions (Biases)

Theories about what it “must” mean or “must not” mean for Jesus to be truly God and truly human should not be allowed to “determine” what the NT reports

“At times philosophers, scientists, theologians (and yes, biblical critics) need to rethink religious judgments about Jesus; and biblical evidence makes its best contribution to that rethinking when presented with as few conscious presuppositions as possible.”

Reference

An Introduction to New Testament

Christology. Raymond Edward Brown,
Paulist Press, New York, 1994. Chapters
1, 2, 3

Who was Jesus of Nazareth?

**2. What Can Be Discerned
About Jesus From His
Words Concerning Issues
Other Than The Kingdom
and Himself**

Outline of Presentation (1)

1. What Can Be Discerned from the Knowledge of that Jesus Shows of the Ordinary Affairs of Life

1.1. Texts Indicating Limited Knowledge

1.1.1. During the Public Ministry

1.1.2. As a Boy

1.2. Texts Indicating Extraordinary or Superhuman Knowledge

1.2.1. Denials of Limitations

1.2.2. Capability of Reading Minds

1.2.3. Knowledge at a Distance

Outline of Presentation (2)

2. What Can Be Discerned from the General Knowledge that Jesus Shows of Religious Matters

2.1. Texts Illustrating Jesus' Knowledge of Scripture

2.1.1. Instances Where a Citation Involves a Mistake

2.1.2. Instances Where a Citation Reflects Imprecise Ideas

2.1.3. Instances Where a Citation Employs a Marginal Hermeneutic

2.1.4. Passages That Portray Jesus as Learned in Scripture

2.2. Texts Illustrating Jesus' Use of Contemporary Religious Concepts

2.2.1. Demonology

2.2.2. Afterlife

2.2.3. Apocalyptic

2.3. Texts Illustrating Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.1. Foreknowledge of His Own Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

2.3.2. Foreknowledge of the Destruction of Jerusalem and its Sanctuary

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia

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1.1 Texts Showing a Limited Knowledge of the *Ordinary Affairs of Life*

1.1.1. During His Public Ministry

Mark 5:30-33: Woman touches Jesus in a crowd and is healed. Jesus asks who touched him.

Luke 8:45-47: similar

Matt 9:22: leaves out question

1.1.2. As a Boy

Luke 2:46: age 12, Jesus asking questions

Luke 2:52: “growing in wisdom. . .”

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1.2. Texts Showing an Extraordinary / Superhuman Knowledge of the *Ordinary Affairs of Life*

1.2.1. Denial of Limitations: Later

Gospels (esp. John) suppress suggestion
Jesus had to gain ordinary knowledge:

John 6:5. Jesus asks Philip where bread can
be found (but says Jesus only testing
Philip)

John 6:64: Jesus chose some disciplines of
poor quality (but knew from the
beginning)

John 6:71, 13:11: Jesus knew Judas
Iscaiot's would betray him

1.2. Texts Showing an Extraordinary / Superhuman Knowledge of the *Ordinary* *Affairs of Life*

1.2.1. Denial of Limitations

In general, there is a Johannine tendency to picture Jesus without human weakness or dependence

1.2.2. Capability of Reading Minds:

- Mark 2:6-8 and par.
- Mark 9:33-35 and Luke 9:46-47
- John 2:24-25; 16:19 and 30

Could be:

- keen perception of human nature
- superhuman knowledge

1.2. Text Showing an Extraordinary / Superhuman Knowledge of the *Ordinary Affairs of Life*

1.2.3. Knowledge at a Distance

John 1:48-49: knew what Nathanael was
doing under fig tree

Mark 11:2 and par; John 12:14: tells
disciples about the colt they will find
in nearby village

1.2. Text Showing an Extraordinary / Superhuman Knowledge of the *Ordinary Affairs of Life*

1.2.3. Knowledge at a Distance

Mark 14:13-14; Luke 22:10-11: tells disciples going out to make Passover preparation that they will meet man with water jar (Note unremarkable version in Matt 26:18)

Matt 17:24-27: tells Peter to go to Lake of Galilee; first fish he catches will have a shekel in its mouth

Summary: 1. Knowledge of the *Ordinary Affairs of Life*

“there is an ancient Gospel tradition that accepts without noticeable difficulty that Jesus had normally limited knowledge of the ordinary affairs of life; most likely the suppression of this by Matt. and John is a secondary theological modification. On the other hand, probably as far back as one can trace the tradition, Jesus was presented as a man with more than ordinary knowledge and perception about others.”

- Father Brown

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2. Jesus' Knowledge of Religious Matters

“In the use of the Scriptures and of theological concepts did Jesus manifest a knowledge far beyond that of his time, so that one would be forced to posit a supernatural sources for this knowledge?”

2.1. Jesus' Knowledge of Scripture

2.1.1. Citations Involves a Mistake

Mark 2:26: Abiathar high priest, not Ahimelech in 1 Sam 21:2-7

Matt 23:35: Zechariah son of Berachiah confused with Zechariah son of Jehoiada (2 Chron 24:20-22)

2.1.2. Citation reflects imprecise ideas of his time

Mark 12:36 and par. Jesus attributes Ps. 110 to David

Matt 12:39-41 & 16:4; Luke 11:29-32: Jesus refers to Book of Jonah as if historical (now felt to be parable)

2.1. Jesus' Knowledge of Scripture

2.1.3. Marginal “Hermeneutics” (= Interpretation of Scriptures)

John 10:33-36: refutes accusation of making himself God with Ps 82:6 (speaks of judges as “gods”)

Mark 12:36: insists “my Lord” in “The Lord [=God] said to my Lord” refers to *the Messiah* (but there was no such expectation when Ps. was written)

2.1. Jesus' Knowledge of Scripture

2.1.4. There is a general admiration for the authority and depth of Jesus' teaching:

- Matt 7:29
- Matt 22:16
- John 7:15

Summary:

2.1. Jesus' Knowledge of Scripture

“. . . the overall impact of . . . Jesus' use of the Scriptures would not lead one to think of him as more than a very distinguished teacher of his times.”

- Father Brown

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2.2. Jesus' Use of Contemporary Religious Concepts

2.2.1. Demon Possession

- “sometimes in relation to demon possession both the evangelists and Jesus are reflecting the inexact medico-religious understanding of their times.”
- Mark 9:17-18: symptoms of epilepsy
 - Mark 5:4: dangerous insanity
 - Matt 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26: reflects primitive idea of demons looking for a place to dwell

2.2. Jesus' Use of Contemporary Religious Concepts

2.2.2. Afterlife

Rarely spoke of afterlife; why?

Used materialistic images in the rare instances he did speak of it

- Mark 9:43ff: enter heaven with bodily defects
- Mark 9:48; Matt 25:41, Mark 9:48, Matt 8:12, Matt 13:42, Luke 16:24:
“unquenchable fire” “ravenous worms”
“grinding teeth and weeping” “insatiable thirst”
- Luke 16:24: chasm bet. heaven/hell
- Mark:13:26, 14:62: heaven above clouds

2.2. Jesus' Use of Contemporary Religious Concepts

2.2.3. Apocalyptic (Jesus' descriptions of the end of time)

- Mark 13:24-25 and par.: sun, moon darkened; stars will fall
- Mark 13:7-8 and par.: wars, earthquakes, famine (= stereotypic descriptions from centuries old Jewish apocalyptic writings)

Summary:

2.2. Jesus' Use of Contemporary Religious Concepts

“In the three areas of demonology, the afterlife, and apocalyptic, Jesus seems to draw on the religious concepts of his time without indication of superior knowledge and without substantially correcting the concepts.”

- Father Brown

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2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

If “Jesus’ knowledge of his own future or of the future of God’s people . . . is very detailed, it might show that he was privy to God’s own knowledge; if it is less detailed, it would at least give us a clue as to what he considered his destiny.”

- Father Brown

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

General Problems:

The Gospel writers were writing after Jesus' death. Matt, Luke, John were probably written after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. It is possible they added details to clarify Jesus' words as prophecy.

If the original details in Jesus' words are vague: do the words represent an unshakable conviction about how things will turn out, or real foreknowledge?

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.1. Foreknowledge of His Own Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

All of the Gospels attribute to Jesus detailed foreknowledge during his ministry
Yet: the disciples who supposedly heard these predictions did not foresee the crucifixion or expect the resurrection.
(see Luke 24:19-26 as typical reaction)

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2.3.1. Foreknowledge of His Own Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

2.3.1.1. Son of Man Sayings

- Mark 8:31
- Mark 9:31
- Mark 10:33-34

(and par)

Three sayings in John the Son of Man that
must be “lifted up,” echoing Isa 52:13

- John 3:14
- John 8:28
- John 12:32-34

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.1. Foreknowledge of His Own Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

2.3.1.1. Son of Man Sayings

Did Mark and subsequent Synoptic Gospel writers (Matt and Luke) represent traditions that had embellished the Son of Man sayings with details from the passion, and does John represent a tradition without this embellishment?

Yet: Passion details different some from the predictions

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.1. Foreknowledge of His Own Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

2.3.1.2. Sayings about the Sign of Jonah

- Matt 12:39-40. A clear prediction of the Resurrection

But compare to version in Luke 11:29-30; 32; (echoed in Matt 12:41)

Another form in Matt 16:4 mentions the sign without explanation: was this the original form?

Did the early church communities add the two possible explanations found in Matt 12 and Luke 11?

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.1. Foreknowledge of His Own Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

2.3.1.3. Foreknowledge of Judas' Betrayal

Present during Jesus' ministry in John 6:70-71

Present at the Last Supper in all the gospels:

- Matt 26:25 and John 13:27: Jesus knows it is Judas
- Luke 22:22: Judas not specified; but Jesus knew his plans (Luke 22:48)
- Mark 14:18-21: Judas not specified (but implied? by Mark 14:10-11)

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.1. Foreknowledge of His Own Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

2.3.1.3. Foreknowledge of Judas' Betrayal

If this prediction is genuine, we must ask if it represents:

- a supernatural foreknowledge
- or a penetrating insight into:
 - Judas' character and/or
 - the direction events are leading

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.1. Foreknowledge of His Own Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

SUMMARY

“In summary, it is difficult to decide about Jesus’ foreknowledge of his passion, crucifixion, and resurrection. Modern criticism would cast serious doubt on a detailed foreknowledge. Yet, we should not undervalue the general agreement of the Gospel tradition that Jesus was convinced beforehand that, although his life would be taken from him violently, God would ultimately vindicate him.”

- Father Brown

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2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.2. Foreknowledge of the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple Sanctuary

2.3.2.1. Destruction of Jerusalem:

Mark 13:2 and par. Temple will be destroyed and not one stone will be left standing.

70 AD: *Roman armies* plundered Jerusalem, *partially* destroying the temple (portions of the Herodian temple remain today: the Wailing wall)

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.2. Foreknowledge of the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple Sanctuary

2.3.2.2. Destruction of Temple Sanctuary:

I will/can destroy the sanctuary, and in three days will build it/raise it up:

before 70 AD:

- Mark 14:57-58: I will . . . build it up

after 70 AD:

- Matt 26:60-61: I am able . . . build it up

- John 2:19-21: Destroy this sanctuary. . .
I will raise it up

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.2. Foreknowledge of the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple Sanctuary

SUMMARY

2.3.2.2. Destruction of Temple Sanctuary:

“This process of various interpretation shows that the original form of the prediction, although it manifested conviction, did not show a foreknowledge of detail that could be given by God alone.”

- Father Brown

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.2. Foreknowledge of the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple Sanctuary

SUMMARY

2.3.2.2. Destruction of Temple Sanctuary:

Use of “I” in the destruction of the temple goes beyond OT prophetic warnings about Jerusalem.

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2.1.1. Instances Where a Citation Involves a Mistake

2.1.2. Instances Where a Citation Reflects Imprecise Ideas

2.1.3. Instances Where a Citation Employs a Marginal Hermeneutic

2.1.4. Passages That Portray Jesus as Learned in Scripture

2.2. Texts Illustrating Jesus' Use of Contemporary Religious Concepts

2.2.1. Demonology

2.2.2. Afterlife

2.2.3. Apocalyptic

2.3. Texts Illustrating Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.1. Foreknowledge of His Own Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

2.3.2. Foreknowledge of the Destruction of Jerusalem and its Sanctuary

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia (= Second Coming)

Did Jesus claim to know when it would happen, or mistakenly expect it to happen within a short time?

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia (= Second Coming)

2.3.3.1. Anticipation Immediately after Jesus' Death

- John 14:3. Last Supper: Jesus will return to take his disciples with him.

Cf: I Thess 4:16-17

Passages that make sense with this interpretation:

- Mark 14:62
- Mark 14:25
- Luke 23:42-43

Other interpretations are possible.

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia (= Second Coming)

2.3.3.2. Anticipation in Lifetime of Jesus' Hearers

At least one generation before Parousia supported by Jesus':

- references to church / community life
- sending disciples to Israel and beyond
- parables on growth
- commands to baptize and commemorate him in the Eucharist

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia (= Second Coming)

2.3.3.2. Anticipation in Lifetime of Jesus' Hearers

- Matt 10:23 plus Mark 6:7,30: “you will not have gone through all the towns . . . before the Son of Man comes.”
- Mark 13:30 and par. “this generation will not pass away before all these things take place.” (But which things?; Mark 13 a collection of sayings)
- Mark 9:1 and Matt 16:28 “some will not taste death . . . before they see the kingdom of God come with power.”

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia (= Second Coming)

2.3.3.2. Anticipation in Lifetime of Jesus' Hearers

- John 1:51: “you will see the sky opened up and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”
- John 21:22: the Beloved Disciple will remain until Jesus comes

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia (= Second Coming)

2.3.3.3. Anticipation Phrased to Imply Indefinitely Delayed Parousia

2.3.3.3.1. *A Parousia Preceded by Apocalyptic Signs:*

List of portents before the Parousia gives the impression it is not coming too soon (reasoning: II Thess 2:3ff)

- Mark 13
- Matt 24-25
- Luke 21

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia (= Second Coming)

2.3.3.3. Anticipation Phrased to Imply Indefinitely Delayed Parousia

2.3.3.3.2. *A Parousia the Time of Which Cannot be Foretold*

Sayings which insist the disciples cannot know when the Lord is coming

- Matt 24:42-44; Luke 12:39-40. Like a thief in the night
- Matt 24:50; Luke 12:46; Like the unexpected return of a master
- Matt 25:13: unprepared bridesmaids
- Luke 17:20-21: no observable signs
- Mark 13:32: Jesus himself did not know.

2.3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Future

SUMMARY

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia (= Second Coming)

“ . . . one finds it difficult to believe that Jesus' own position was clear. The NT Epistles give independent evidence of the confusion that reigned in the 1st century thought about the Parousia; and such confusion could scarcely have arisen if Jesus both knew about the indefinite delay of the Parousia and expressed himself clearly on the subject.”

- Father Brown

1. What Can Be Discerned from the Knowledge of that Jesus Shows of the **Ordinary Affairs of Life**

1.1. *Texts Indicating Limited Knowledge*

1.1.1. During the Public Ministry

1.1.2. As a Boy

1.2. *Texts Indicating Extraordinary or Superhuman Knowledge*

1.2.1. Denials of Limitations

1.2.2. Capability of Reading Minds

1.2.3. Knowledge at a Distance

2. What Can Be Discerned from the General Knowledge that Jesus Shows of **Religious Matters**

2.1. *Texts Illustrating Jesus' Knowledge of Scripture*

2.1.1. Instances Where a Citation Involves a Mistake

2.2.2. Instances Where a Citation Reflects Imprecise Ideas

2.2.3. Instances Where a Citation Employs a Marginal Hermeneutic

2.2.4. Passages That Portray Jesus as Learned in Scripture

2.2. *Texts Illustrating Jesus' Use of Contemporary Religious Concepts*

2.2.1. Demonology

2.2.2. Afterlife

2.2.3. Apocalyptic

2.3. *Texts Illustrating Jesus' Knowledge of the Future*

2.3.1. Foreknowledge of His Own Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

2.3.2. Foreknowledge of the Destruction of Jerusalem and its Sanctuary

2.3.3. Foreknowledge of the Parousia

Summary:

Jesus' Ordinary and Religious Knowledge

“Jesus had to know all things” *Problem:*

- Signs of limitations in Jesus' knowledge are present throughout

“Jesus presented himself as just an ordinary man.” *Problems:*

- Jesus had “more than ordinary knowledge and perception about others”
- taught with authority and depth
- was convinced God would punish Jerusalem and the Temple and make him victorious

Summary:

Jesus' Ordinary and Religious Knowledge

Was Jesus then a *prophet*, one especially sent by God to challenge the Jews?

But Jesus' self-estimation went beyond OT prophets:

- Rejection of Him would cause divine action against Jerusalem and the temple
- Said "I will" / "I am able" to destroy the temple
- He is the one who will bring God's plan to completion

Reference and Source

**An Introduction to New Testament
Christology.** Raymond Edward Brown,
Paulist Press, New York, 1994. Chapter
4.

Who was Jesus of Nazareth?

**3. What Can Be Discerned
About Jesus From His Deeds
and Words Proclaiming The
Kingdom of God**

Outline of Presentation

- 1. Introduction: The Messiah and the Kingdom of God**
- 2. What Jesus' *Deeds* Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology**
 - 2.1. Acts of Power**
 - 2.2. Table Fellowship in Anticipation of the Eschatological Banquet**
 - 2.3. Forgiveness of Sins**
- 3. What Jesus' *Words* Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology**
 - 3.1. The Parables**
 - 3.2. Statements on the Importance of Following Him**
 - 3.3. Statements Where Jesus Speaks As If With the Authority of God**
- 4. Summary**

➤ **1. Introduction: The Messiah and the Kingdom of God**

2. What Jesus' *Deeds* Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology

2.1. Acts of Power

2.2. Table Fellowship in Anticipation of the Eschatological Banquet

2.3. Forgiveness of Sins

3. What Jesus' *Words* Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology

3.1. The Parables

3.2. Statements on the Importance of Following Him

3.3. Statements Where Jesus Speaks As If With the Authority of God

4. Summary

Introduction: The Messiah and the Kingdom of God

Jesus' primary interest was the
proclamation of the Kingdom of God

- “kingdom” = translation of Greek *basileia*
- primarily used as an activity (rule, reign)
 - at times associated with spatial imagery (door, entering into . . .)
 - refers to both kingship and the kingdom produced by that kingship

Introduction: The Messiah and the Kingdom of God

Jewish Expectations at Jesus' Time:

- Messiah (anointed King of the House of David)
- Defeat of Israel's enemies
- Kingdom (Egypt to Mesopotamia) of prosperity, peace, justice

Jesus' Kingdom:

- Kingship of God, not of David
- Defeat of Satan and the Forces of Evil
- Kingdom without geographical borders that affects all of the creation

1. Introduction: The Messiah and the Kingdom of God

➤ 2. *What Jesus' Deeds*

Proclaiming the Kingdom

Tell Us about His Christology

2.1. Acts of Power

2.2. Table Fellowship in Anticipation of the Eschatological Banquet

2.3. Forgiveness of Sins

3. *What Jesus' Words* Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology

3.1. The Parables

3.2. Statements on the Importance of Following Him

3.3. Statements Where Jesus Speaks As If With the Authority of God

4. Summary

**What Jesus' *Deeds*
Proclaiming the Kingdom
Tell Us about His Christology
Acts of Power**

Jesus' Acts of Power (commonly called miracles) were one of the *means by which the Kingdom of God broke into the world,* reclaiming people and the world from the domination of evil. The lines of demarcation between Jesus and God in this intervention are very vague.

**What Jesus' *Deeds*
Proclaiming the Kingdom
Tell Us about His Christology
Acts of Power**

Modern Skepticism About Jesus' Miracles

Bultmann's attitude: "modern" man does not believe in miracles, so Jesus must not have worked miracles

The modern worldview cannot be the measure of history

Even Jesus' enemies are not portrayed as denying he did extraordinary deeds

**What Jesus' *Deeds*
Proclaiming the Kingdom
Tell Us about His Christology
Acts of Power**

Claim that Jesus was One of Many Miracle-Working Teachers in His Era

- largely a fiction
- Jesus' combination of teaching and miracles may be unique

What Jesus' *Deeds* Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology Acts of Power

Commonly cited Jewish “wonder-workers”

- **Honi** (Onias) **the rainmaker** (or circle-maker). 1st century B.C.
- Galilean **Hannina**. 1st century A.D.
- portraits are from much later Rabbinic literature
- unclear if they worked miracles or brought God's help through persuasive prayer

What Jesus' *Deeds* Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology Acts of Power

Commonly cited pagan parallel to Jesus:

Apollonius of Tyana (first century neo-Pythagorean philosopher)

- knowledge of his life comes from book by Philostratus written 200 years later, regarded by some scholars as largely fictitious
- miracles attributed to Apollonius may have been influenced by stories about Jesus

What Jesus' *Deeds* Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology Acts of Power

English “miracle” (from Latin *mirari* “to wonder at”) emphasizes deeds as astounding and is thus somewhat misleading

- Jesus refused to work miracles to “show off”

Word used in the Synoptic Gospels” Greek *dynamis* = “acts of power”

**What Jesus' *Deeds*
Proclaiming the Kingdom
Tell Us about His Christology
Acts of Power**

**Jesus' use of "miracles" or Acts of Power
were tied to the coming of the Kingdom of
God**

*Matt 12:28 (Luke 11:20): "But if it is by
the Spirit of God that I cast out
demons, then the kingdom of God has
come to you." (NRSV)*

*Luke 7:16 (resuscitation of the son of the
widow of Nain): "God has visited his
people."*

**What Jesus' *Deeds*
Proclaiming the Kingdom
Tell Us about His Christology
Acts of Power**

**Jesus' use of "miracles" or Acts of Power
were tied to the coming of the Kingdom of
God**

Mark 4:37-41: Calming of the storm,
seen in light of the worldview that
Satan showed his power by disrupting
nature

The healing of the blind, lame, lepers,
raising the dead, seen in the light of
Isaiah 61:1-3

**What Jesus' *Deeds*
Proclaiming the Kingdom
Tell Us about His Christology
Acts of Power – Summary**

Jesus by his Acts of Power presents himself
as *introducing God's dominion (the
Kingdom of God) over the evil that has
ruled the world since Adam's sin*

Line of demarcation between Jesus and God
in this intervention is very vague

**What Jesus' *Deeds*
Proclaiming the Kingdom
Tell Us about His Christology
Table Fellowship in Anticipation of
the Eschatological Banquet**

The **Eschatological Banquet**: a great banquet to be eaten by the just with God when the Kingdom has come (Jesus uses this imagery in the Parable of the Great Supper or Wedding Feast)

- Jesus' meals with tax collectors and sinners
- Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples: last meal in anticipation of the heavenly banquet (Mark 14:25; Matt 26:29; Luke 22:18)

**What Jesus' *Deeds*
Proclaiming the Kingdom
Tell Us about His Christology
Table Fellowship in Anticipation of
the Eschatological Banquet**

Jesus in his table fellowship is in the same position as God in the Eschatological Banquet

What Jesus' *Deeds*
Proclaiming the Kingdom
Tell Us about His Christology
The Forgiveness of Sins

Jesus claimed the *power to forgive sins* (a power of God alone)
- often caused dissent (Mark 2:5-12)

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 - 2.3. Forgiveness of Sins**
- 3. What Jesus' *Words* Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology**
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 - 3.3. Statements Where Jesus Speaks As If With the Authority of God**
- 4. Summary**

What Jesus' Words Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology The Parables

Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom

- Accept above all else (*Pearl of Great Value*)
- Try not to lose anyone (*Lost Sheep*)
- Choice must be made (*Wedding Feast*)
- Be ready (*Ten Maidens*)
- Judgment coming based on acceptance/rejection values of the Kingdom's values (*Unforgiving Servant, Sheep and the Goats*)
- Jesus like the bridegroom (*Mark 2:19*)

Proclaiming the Kingdom

Tell Us about His Christology

Statements on the Importance of Following Him

Following Jesus:

- more important than burying the dead (Luke 9:59-60)
- more important than family ties (Luke 14:26, Matt 10:37)

Salvation depends on Jesus:

- judgment based on acknowledgment / rejection of Jesus (Luke 12:8-9; Matt 7:21-27)
- losing one life for Jesus' sake brings salvation (Luke 9:24)
- must accept Jesus' standards to enter the kingdom (Mark 10:15)

Proclaiming the Kingdom

Tell Us about His Christology

Statements Where Jesus Speaks As If With the Authority of God

Jesus has the power to assign his disciples roles in heaven (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:28-30)

Jesus can modify or eliminate what God said to Moses:

- “You have heard it said. . . But I say to you. . .” sayings (Matt 5:21-44)
- He is not bound by interpretations of Sabbath Laws and purity

Proclaiming the Kingdom Tell Us about His Christology Statements Where Jesus Speaks As If With the Authority of God

Jesus' teachings & demands were spoken with first person authority: "Amen, I say to you," "Truly I tell you," (= Jesus pledges his person behind the truth of his proclamation), rather than invoking the authority of God

- contrast with the prophetic custom of "The Lord says. . ." (Isa. 1:24, Jer. 2:12, Hosea 11:11, Amos 3:11)

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Summary

Jesus' Deeds and Words about the Kingdom of God and his self-understanding of who he was. Jesus:

- believed he was bringing the Kingdom of God into a world under the domination of evil, in part through the means of Acts of Power
- acted in the role of God through his Table Fellowship and his forgiveness of sins
- spoke with first person authority:
 - demanding urgent acceptance of his proclamation of the Kingdom,
 - as one who could overrule Moses, not needing to invoke the authority of God

Reference and Source

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5.

Who was Jesus of Nazareth?

**4. What Can Be Discerned
About Jesus From His
Words Concerning Himself**

Outline of Presentation

1. Introduction
2. Did Jesus Affirm That He Was the **Messiah?**
3. Did Jesus Affirm That He Was the **Son of God?**
4. Did Jesus Affirm That He Was the **Son of Man?**
5. Summary

Introduction

Goals: to explore:

- Jesus' use of the titles Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man for himself,
- his acceptance of such titles applied to him by others

Cautions:

- Jesus' lack of use of a particular title for himself does not mean that the later Christian understanding that he was the Messiah, Son of God, and Son of Man is wrong
- Jesus could have been conscious of possessing the relationship to God implied in the titles without using the titles (i.e. without having the terminology to express it)

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah?

Early Church clearly believed Jesus was the Messiah

- Greek *Christos* = the expected *anointed* [king of the House of David]
- “Christian” = one who accepted Jesus as Christ

Question: did early Christians project a post-resurrectional faith back onto scenes of Jesus’ life? or did Jesus actually say he was the Messiah?

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? Peter's Confession

Peter's Confession (Mark 8:29-33; Matt.
16:15-23; Luke 9:20-22)

- “Who do people say that I am / the Son of Man is?”
- “You are the Messiah / the Messiah of God / the Messiah, the Son of the Living God”
- also a parallel in John 6:66-71: Peter confesses Jesus “Holy One of God”

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? Peter's Confession

Jesus' Reaction:

Mark, Luke: Jesus does not deny he is
the Messiah, but says to tell no one
Part of a picture in which Jesus does not
explicitly accept the designation
“Messiah” until the necessary element
of suffering is not overlooked
Peter does not understand this: he
rebukes Jesus when Jesus talks of the
need for Son of Man to suffer

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? Peter's Confession

Conclusion: suggests:

- Jesus' followers hailed him as the Messiah
- Jesus may have thought it involved some misunderstanding of who the Messiah was, but he did not deny their designation

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? High Priest's Question at Sanhedrin Trial

High Priest's Question at the Sanhedrin Trial
(Mark 14:61-62, Matt 63-64; Luke 22:67-69)

Mark/Matt.: “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed / the Son of the Living God?”

Luke: Messiah and Son of God questions separated

Parallels in John: Messiah question during Jesus' ministry (John 10:24-25)

Where did the Jewish authorities get the idea Jesus might be the Messiah?

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? High Priest's Question at Sanhedrin Trial

Jesus' answer:

Mark: "I am"

Matt.: "That is what you say."

Luke: "If I tell you, you will not believe;
and if I ask you, you will not answer."

John's parallel: "I told you, and you do
not believe."

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? High Priest's Question at Sanhedrin Trial

Conclusions:

- Jesus did not deny he was the Messiah
- He was however wary when opponents used the title of him because they would not believe or understand him

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? Samaritan Woman in John 4:25-26

Samaritan Woman's confession of faith "I know that a/the Messiah is coming. . ."
Jesus: "I, the one speaking to you, I am (he)."

Problem: Samaritans did not expect the Messiah; they had rejected the covenant between God and David

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? “The King of the Jews”

Pilate asks Jesus if he was the “King of the Jews” in all four gospels (Mark 15:2, Matt 27:11,17,22; Luke 23:2; John 18:33)

Strong case has been made for the historical accuracy of the title on the cross “The King of the Jews”

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah?

Early Christian Confession of Jesus as the Messiah

Is it plausible that early Christians who identify themselves as followers of Jesus the Messiah if there had been no reference to him as the Messiah before he died?

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Messiah? Conclusions

The issue of Jesus as the Messiah did arise during his lifetime

“...some of those arraigned against him, Jews and/or Gentiles, thought that he or his followers claimed that he was the Messiah [king].”

the “followers of Jesus during his lifetime confessed him as the Messiah.”

“Jesus ever denied that he was the Messiah” but
“Jesus never clearly or enthusiastically accepted the title in the sense in which both followers and opponents proposed it for him.”

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God?

Introduction

Calling someone “son” in relation to God is ambiguous. It may imply only a special relationship to God. For example:

- angels in OT: “sons of God”
- Davidic king: treated as God’s son
- nation of Israel referred to as God’s son in

Hosea 11:1

For Christians “Son of God” implies a *unique* relationship with God

- Question: Did Jesus call or consider himself the “Son of God”
- (Different from question: Was Jesus the “Son of God”)

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to God as Father

Jesus spoke of God as “my Father;” never
said “our Father”

Some Problems. *First:*

- “my Father:” mostly in Matt. (0 in
Mark 4 in Luke)
- no Synoptic parallels to Matthew's use
of “my Father”
 - Matt 12:50 vs. Mark 3:35/Luke 8:21
 - Matt 26:29 vs. Mark 14:25

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to God as Father

Some Problems. *Second:*

Jesus Frequently speaks to disciples of
“your Father:”

- Matt 7:21, Matt 18:14

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to God as Father

Some Problems. *Third:*

Argument has been made that Jesus addressing God as “Abba” (Aramaic) was distinctive. *Abba* = “Daddy”

Problems:

- *Abba* transliterated Aramaic appears only in Mark 14:36
- *abba* as “daddy” after 200 AD; was *abi* 200 BC to 200 AD

Nonetheless: Jesus' use was distinctive.

Abba rarely used as personal address for God in other literature of the time

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to God as Father

Some Problems. *Fourth:*

- even John -- who makes distinction Jesus Son (*huios*) of God vs. Christian believers as children (*tekna*) – uses Father language broadly
- John 20:17 “I am ascending to my Father and your Father.”

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to God as Father

Conclusions. We can at least say this:

“If Jesus presented himself as the first of many to stand in a new and special relationship to God as Father, that priority implies his sonship was in some way superior to the sonship of all who would follow him.”

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to Himself as Son

Jesus in John's gospel clearly proclaims himself
the Son of God

John 3:16: "God's only Son"

John 10:30: "The Father and I are one."

John 14:9: "Whoever has seen me has seen
the Father."

Problems posed by scholars:

- John last gospel
- represents a developed understanding of
who Jesus was by the Johannine
community; gospel was written to show
the understanding that Jesus Son of God

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God?

Jesus' References to Himself as Son

Passages in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus Speaks of Himself as Son

- Matt 11:27, Luke 10:22: “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.”
Called the “Johannine logion”
- Mark 13:32: “Of that day or the hour no one knows, not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Why would early church add “Son” to passage speaking of limitations of Jesus’ knowledge?

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to Himself as Son

Passages in the Synoptic Gospels where
Jesus Speaks of Himself as Son (cont)

- Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard
(Mark 12:1-12).
- comparison likely goes back to
Jesus: son stands in the line of
martyred and rejected prophets

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of God? Jesus' References to Himself as Son

Conclusions (if you discount John):

- “it likely that Jesus spoke and thought of himself as “the Son,” implying a very special relationship to God that is part of his identity and status”
- he never indisputably uses the title “Son of God” for himself

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man? Introduction

There is massive scholarly disagreement about:

- was “Son of Man” a title known in Jesus’ day?
- what “Son of Man” means
- whether Jesus actually used it of himself

Statistics:

- terms “Messiah” and “Son of God” infrequent in the gospels
- term “Son of Man:” 80 times in the gospel, all but 2 Jesus referring to himself

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

Introduction

Did Jesus actually use this title for himself?

- Why would early church have retrojected this term so frequently – as opposed to “Son of God” or “Messiah”?
- its frequent use suggests it was particularly remembered as coming from Jesus

What did Jesus mean when he spoke of himself as “Son of Man”? Was there a first century Jewish meaning to this title?

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

Was there a Jewish Concept of the Son of Man?

Jewish apocrypha

- suggests a first century Jewish expectation for a specific human figure who would be an instrument of divine judgment. Called “Son of Man” because he embodied the destiny of righteous human beings.
- reflections on Daniel 7: “one like a son of man” to whom God would give glory and dominion
- *I Enoch, IV Ezra (II Esdras)*

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

Was there a Jewish Concept of the Son of Man?

Parables section of *I Enoch*: “Son of Man:”

- “face had the appearance of a human being”
- he is like one of the holy angels, but has a rank higher than the angels
- named in the presence of the Lord of Spirits before the sun and stars created
- “the Elect One”
- the Messiah
- seated at the throne of glory
- has a judgment role

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

Was there a Jewish Concept of the Son of Man?

Suggests there may have been a concept of “Son of Man” in Jewish apocalyptic thought that Jesus was familiar with. The “Son of Man” was:

- messianic human figure
- heavenly preexistent origin
- gloried by God
- made a judge

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

If there was no Jewish Concept of the Son of Man

Most scholars feel “Son of Man” was a title made up by Jesus or his followers, perhaps based on their own reflection on Daniel 7 and other OT passages (Ps 110, perhaps Ps 80:18)

Jesus sense of its meaning: Mark 14:61-62 & par.:

- “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”
- “I am, and you will see the *Son of Man* seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven””

Did Jesus Affirm That He Was The Son of Man?

Conclusions

- it is likely this was a term used by Jesus himself
- Daniel 7's apocalyptic portrayal of "one like a son of man" who is exalted by God and endowed with kingship was likely part of Jesus' understanding of his mission

Conclusions

Although friends and foes claimed he was the Messiah, Jesus did not enthusiastically embrace this title, perhaps because of their misunderstandings about the title

Jesus pictured himself in a filial relationship to God, calling God “Father” and talking of himself as “Son.”

- his sonship was prior / foundational to the believers becoming “children” of God

Conclusions

Jesus' use of term "Son of Man," (whether based on prior Jewish reflection on Daniel 7 or his own), shows how he felt about himself as an instrument of God's plan: "the specific human figure whom God glorifies and through whom God manifests the final triumph."

Reference and Source

**An Introduction to New Testament
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6.

Who was Jesus of Nazareth?

**5. Views of Jesus in the Early
New Testament Church
Based on the Second
Coming (the Parousia) and
the Resurrection**

Outline

Review of Previous Sessions

- Christology
- Jesus' Discernment of His Christology (Who He Was, What His Mission Was in the Divine Plan)
 - as seen in his knowledge of ordinary things and religious matters
 - as seen in his deeds and words proclaiming the Kingdom of God
 - as seen in his words about himself

What Did New Testament Christians Think About Jesus?

- Christologies based on the Second Coming of Jesus (The Parousia)
- Christologies based on the Resurrection

Review of Previous Sessions

- Christology
- Jesus' Discernment of His Christology (Who He Was, What His Mission Was in the Divine Plan)

What Did New Testament Christians Think About Jesus?

- Christologies based on the Second Coming of Jesus (The Parousia)
- Christologies based on the Resurrection

Christology

Meaning

“Christology:” the study of:

- who was Jesus?
- what role did he play in the God’s divine plan?

Christology

Revelation

325 AD: Council of Nicaea

451 AD: Council of Chalcedon

Jesus:

- fully God and fully Human
- equal to God the Father
- existed from all eternity

Christology

Revelation

We believe this 4th century understanding was a divine revelation about Jesus
Early believers did not fully comprehend this revelation: Christian religious understanding, like any human understanding, developed and grew

Review of Previous Sessions

- Christology
- Jesus' Discernment of His Christology
(Who He Was, What His Mission Was
in the Divine Plan)
 - as seen in his knowledge of ordinary
things and religious matters
 - as seen in his deeds and words
proclaiming the Kingdom of God
 - as seen in his words about himself

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Jesus' Discernment of His Christology

1. as seen through Jesus' ordinary and religious knowledge

“Jesus had to know all things” *Problem:*

- Signs of limitations in Jesus' knowledge are present throughout

“Jesus presented himself as just an ordinary man.” *Problems:*

- Jesus had “more than ordinary knowledge and perception about others”
- taught with authority and depth
- was convinced God would punish Jerusalem and the Temple and make him victorious

Jesus' Discernment of His Christology

1. as seen through Jesus' ordinary and religious knowledge

Was Jesus then a *prophet*, one especially sent by God to challenge the Jews?

But Jesus' self-estimation went beyond OT prophets:

- Rejection of Him would cause divine action against Jerusalem and the temple
- Said "I will" / "I am able" to destroy the temple
- Jesus seemed to believe he is the one who will bring God's plan to completion

Jesus' Discernment of His Christology

2. as seen in Jesus' *Words and Deeds About the Kingdom of God*

Jesus:

- believed he was bringing the Kingdom of God into a world under the domination of evil, in part through the means of Acts of Power (= miracles)
- acted in the role of God through his Table Fellowship and his forgiveness of sins
- spoke with first person authority:
 - demanding urgent acceptance of his proclamation of the Kingdom,
 - as one who could overrule Moses, not needing to invoke the authority of God

Jesus' Discernment of His Christology

3. as seen in Jesus' words concerning himself

Messiah: Although friends and foes claimed he was the **Messiah**, Jesus did not enthusiastically embrace this title, perhaps because of their misunderstandings about the title

Son of God: Jesus pictured himself in a filial relationship to God, calling God “Father” and talking of himself as “**Son.**”
- his sonship was prior / foundational to the believers becoming “children” of God

Jesus' Discernment of His Christology

3. as seen in Jesus' *words* concerning himself

Son of Man: Jesus' use of term “**Son of Man,**” (whether based on prior Jewish reflection on Daniel 7 or his own reflection), shows how he felt about himself as an instrument of God's plan: “the specific human figure whom God glorifies and through whom God manifests the final triumph.”

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What Did New Testament Christians Think About Jesus?

Our Present Task:

What did Christians of the first century (= the New Testament Period) think about:

- Who was Jesus?
- What was Jesus' role in God's Divine Plan?

What Did New Testament Christians Think About Jesus?

Our Approach:

- Look at the early Christian ideas of “Who was Jesus?” and “What was his role in the divine plan?” (i.e. early Christian “Christologies”) based on the *events or “scenes”* in his life that motivated or drove the ideas.
 - These scenes and events = “Christological moments”
- Start with the earliest Christian ideas about Jesus and move to later and more mature.

What Did New Testament Christians Think About Jesus?

Today we look at:

Some of the earliest Christologies, which were based on:

- the Second Coming of Jesus (the Parousia)
- the Resurrection

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Christologies Based on the Second Coming

A christology that looks to the *future*

An expectation of a Second Coming of Jesus
from heaven (the Parousia) was very
strong in the New Testament Period

Christologies Based on the Second Coming Peter's Second Sermon in Acts

Does not resemble Luke's (author of Acts) more mature Christology; hence felt to be a quote from an earlier tradition.

Acts 3:19-21: Peter seems to suggest that only when Jesus comes back will he be the Messiah

- Jesus would then be the Messiah expected by the Jews: anointed Davidic king bringing victory, peace, prosperity to Israel and the earth, reigning in Jerusalem

Christologies Based on the Second Coming Maranatha Prayer

- Maranatha Prayer** (“Our Lord, come!”)
also suggests a future expectation of
Jesus Second Coming (when Jesus came,
he would be the Lord ruling the earth)
- Prayer preserved in
 - transliterated Aramaic: 1 Cor.16:22
 - Greek translation: Rev. 22:20
 - plausibly dates back to Paul’s first
experiences with Christians in the 30’s

Christologies Based on the Second Coming Future “Son of Man” Sayings

Future “Son of Man” Sayings = passages that speak of the Son of Man returning from heaven to judge the world / raise the dead

- found in all gospels and in postulated preGospel sources
- meaning: when Jesus came back, he would fulfill the role of the “son of man” in Daniel 7 = a human being to whom God (“The Ancient of Days”) would give all power and judgment.

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Christologies Based on the Resurrection

A christology that emphasizes the *present* – who Jesus is – with the resurrection the “moment” giving expression to that reality

There is more abundant evidence for a Resurrection christology than for the Second Coming christology

- dominant christology of Peter and Paul’s sermons in Acts
- found in some “prePauline” traditions documented by Paul in his Letters

Christologies Based on the Resurrection

References to the Resurrection in Acts

Peter in Acts 2:32-33,36: “This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God. . . Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (NRSV)

Peter in Acts 5:31: “God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior. . .”
(NRSV)

Christologies Based on the Resurrection

References to the Resurrection in Acts

Paul in Acts 13:32-33:

“And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’” (NRSV)

Christologies Based on the Resurrection

References to the Resurrection in Acts

Paul in Acts 13:32-33:

- Ps. 2: related to coronation of the kings of Judah
- prophet Nathan: David's offspring will be treated as God's own son (so when a king was crowned, in a sense he became God's son)
- implies: Jesus' resurrection was his enthronement in heaven, his royal coronation, hence the moment he became the "Son of God"

Christologies Based on the Resurrection PrePauline Traditions

Romans 1:3-4: Paul quotes a gospel formulation he expects Romans to recognize (a formulation thought to date from the 40's when Roman church founded by missionaries from Jerusalem):

“[God’s] 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.” (NRSV)

Christologies Based on the Resurrection PrePauline Traditions

Romans 1:3-4: suggests a Christology in which:

- by natural birth Jesus was the Messiah descended from David
- by the resurrection Jesus became the Son of God through the Spirit of Holiness
- (Spirit of Holiness = Hebraized Greek, not Paul's usual way of referring to the Holy Spirit, but perhaps native to the Church in Rome)

Christologies Based on the Resurrection PrePauline Traditions

PrePauline Hymn in Phil 2:6-11:

“[Jesus] humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. . .” (NRSV)

Christologies Based on the Resurrection PrePauline Traditions

PrePauline Hymn in Phil 2:6-11:

- hymn may have originally been composed in Aramaic, dating to Palestine of the late 30's
- Old Testament tradition: knowing the name of a person means knowing the identity of a person; hence importance of bestowing a name (compare: God name revealed to Moses in Exod. 3:14)

Christologies Based on the Resurrection Summary

Resurrection Christologies =

- “two step” Christologies. God at the Resurrection:
 - makes Jesus Lord and Messiah, or
 - begets or designates Jesus as the divine Son, or
 - gives Jesus an exalted name
- may reflect that for the disciples the Resurrection *revealed* new aspects of Jesus they had not previously appreciated

Summary

Early Christian Views of Jesus based on the Second Coming and the Resurrection

All likely pre-50's Christologies.

Second Coming Christologies

- Jesus would return as “Messiah” (in the way expected by most first century Jews) in the Second Coming.
- Involved the least change from Jewish expectations for the Messiah

Summary

Early Christian Views of Jesus based on the Second Coming and the Resurrection

Resurrection Christologies.

- Jesus becomes (is exalted to) Messiah, Son of God in the Resurrection.
- Involved a greater change from Jewish expectations for the Messiah: the victory, peace, prosperity anticipated on earth are now present in heaven where Jesus reigns

Reference and Source

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Christology.** Raymond Edward Brown,
Paulist Press, New York, 1994. Chapter
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6. Views of Jesus in the Early Church Based on His Public Ministry

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Were based on the Second Coming and the Resurrection

Likely from before the 50 AD.

Second Coming Christologies

- Jesus would return as “Messiah” (in the way expected by most first century Jews) in the Second Coming.

Resurrection Christologies.

- “Two-step Christology” of lowly service during his life, then exaltation to Messiah, Son of God in the Resurrection.

Gospel Writers' Views of Jesus

Apparent in Their Narratives of Jesus' Public Ministry

Not a “two-step” Christology

Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John (writing 65 to 95 AD) all clearly present Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God, and Son of Man during his public ministry

- At the start of Jesus Public Ministry, at his baptism by John, God speaks from heaven “My Beloved Son.” (Mark 1:11, Matt 3:17, Luke 3:22)

Gospel Writers' Views of Jesus

Apparent in Their Narratives of Jesus' Public Ministry

“My Beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.”

- Ps 2:7 (“...You are my son; today I have begotten you.” (NRSV))
- Isa. 42:1-2 (“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. . . He will not cry or lift up his voice. . .” (NRSV))

Gospel Writers' Views of Jesus

Apparent in Their Narratives of Jesus' Public Ministry

Jesus is both:

- Messiah and Son of God
- the Servant who did not cry out (Isa. 42:2)
and who was pierced for our offenses,
bearing the guilt of all (Isa. 53)

Tension: how to present Jesus' servanthood
(status as fully human) with his status as
Messiah, Son of Man, Son of God

Each of the four gospels differ in how they
emphasize Jesus as Messiah/Son of God
versus lowly Servant

Mark

Places the greatest emphasis on Jesus as the lowly Servant, Jesus' limitations as human

No human being recognizes or acknowledges Jesus as Son of God during his ministry:

- Readers know from Jesus baptism; demons know (Mark 1:24, 3:11, 5:7)
- Only through Jesus' suffering on the Cross can Jesus' full identity be understood by his disciples (or by future believers). Only then do they acknowledge him as Son of God (Mark 15:39)

Mark

Full Understanding Can Come Only Through Jesus' Suffering on the Cross

Mark 8:27-33: Peter's confession:

- Peter confesses Jesus as Messiah, but does not understand messiahship as involving suffering

Mark 9:2-8: Transfiguration

- God's voice again: "This is my beloved Son."
- Disciples still do not understand

Mark

Emphasis on Jesus' Humanity

Mark's Jesus often does not know
everything

- Only the Father knows the future events
affecting the earth's fate (Mark 13:32)

Jesus asks the Father to spare him from the
suffering / crucifixion

On the cross: "My God, my God, why have
you forsaken me." (Mark 15:34)

Matthew

Allows the disciples to recognize Jesus' exalted status in rare moments of faith.

Tones down some scenes in Mark that portray Jesus' limitations and disrespect/rudeness of the disciples.

In general: clears up some of the ambiguous (Jesus as human vs. Jesus as God) events of Jesus' ministry by supplying "post-resurrectional" answers

Matthew

Disciples Recognize Jesus' Exalted Status in Moments of Faith

Jesus Walking on Water (Mark 6:47-52 vs. Matt. 14:23-33). When Jesus calms the wind:

- Mark, “they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.” (NRSV).
- Matt: they worship Jesus “Truly you are the Son of God.” (NRSV)

Matthew

Disciples Recognize Jesus' Exalted Status in Moments of Faith

Peter's Confession (Mark 8:27-33 vs Matt. 16:13-23)

- Mark and Matt. both affirm Peter does not understand messiahship involves suffering
- Mark: "You are the Messiah."
- Matt: "You are the Messiah, *the Son of the Living God.*" And Jesus answers "Flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven."
(NRSV)

Matthew

Tones Down Portraits of Jesus' Limitations, Disciples' Disrespect / Rudeness

On the way to healing the daughter of Jairus, when Jesus is touched by the woman with hemorrhage (Mark 5:30-34 vs Matt 9:20-22)

- Mark: Jesus asks who touched him; disciples rebuke him for a foolish question
- Matt.: Jesus turns, sees the woman, and heals her

Matthew

Tones Down Portraits of Jesus' Limitations, Disciples' Disrespect / Rudeness

Jesus asleep in a boat during a storm (Mark 4:35-41 vs Matt. 8:23-27)

- Mark: Disciples wake him and accuse
“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (NRSV)
- Matt: Disciples wake him and pray:
“Lord, save us! We are perishing!”
(NRSV)

Matthew

Tones Down Portraits of Jesus' Limitations, Disciples' Disrespect / Rudeness

Jesus' Cursing of the Fig Tree (Mark 11:20-21 vs Matt. 21:19-20)

- Mark: withers the next day
- Matt.: withers immediately

Two-stage healing of the blind man (Mark 8:22-26) – Jesus must lay his hand on twice to fully heal – omitted by Matt.

- Matt. includes the stories from Mark before the healing (Matt 16:5-12) and after (Matt. 16:13-20)

Luke

Like Mark, does not have the disciples recognizing Jesus' exalted status during his ministry

- perhaps because Luke can document fully the disciples' post-resurrectional faith and understanding of Jesus in "Luke II" – Acts of the Apostles. (Matt. had to superimpose his "Acts of the Apostles" onto his gospel narrative.)

Tones down even more than Matt. scenes that portray Jesus' limitations and disrespect/rudeness/lack of faith of the disciples.

Luke

Disciples Do Not Fully Recognize Jesus' Exalted Status During Jesus' Ministry

Peter's Confession (Mark 8:27-33 vs Matt.
16:13-23 vs Luke 9:18-22)

- Mark: "You are the Messiah."
- Matt: "You are the Messiah, *the Son of the Living God.*"
- Luke: "The Messiah of God." (Later Peter will confess a full understanding in Acts 4:11-12)

(Disciples however do refer to Jesus as "Lord," reminding reader of Jesus' exalted status)

Luke

Tones Down More Than Matt. Portraits of Jesus' Limitations, Disciples' Disrespect / Rudeness / Lack of Faith

Gethsemane:

- Luke's Jesus, unlike Mark and Matt. not "sorrowful unto death," falling to the earth on his face."
- Disciples' lack of faith not foretold; they are not rebuked for falling asleep three times; there is no mention of them fleeing (Jesus finds them asleep once "out of grief")

On the Cross: Jesus does not cry out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Luke

Tones Down More Than Matt. Portraits of Jesus' Limitations, Disciples' Disrespect / Rudeness / Lack of Faith

“The noble Lucan Jesus . . . is at peace with God and himself (23:46) [and] has disciples who remain with him in his trials (22:28)”

- Luke 23:46: Jesus' last words on the cross: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”
- Luke 22:28: Jesus words to his disciples at the Last Supper: “You are those who have stood by me in my trials.”

John

In the tension between:

- Jesus' lowly servanthood, Jesus' humanity
- Jesus' exalted status

John weighs so heavily on Jesus' exalted status that his human weakness almost disappear

Jesus clearly states during his ministry that he is the Son of God

Jesus' disciples recognize him to be the Son of God from the beginning of Jesus' ministry

John

Disciples Recognize Jesus as Son of God from the Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

First time a human being professes Jesus as the “Son of God:”

- Mark: Roman centurion after Jesus dies on the cross
- Luke: no one
- Matt: middle of Jesus' ministry in a rare moment of faith
- John: within days of the disciples encountering Jesus (John 1:41, 49)

John

Jesus Claims to be Son of God During His Ministry

Jesus:

- frequently speaks of himself as the Son of God
- claims unity with the Father (John 10:30, 38; 14:9)

John

Jesus' Human Weaknesses Almost Disappear

John's Jesus knows all things:

- When Jesus asks where shall they buy bread (John 6:5-6), John tells reader Jesus asked not because he did not know, but to test the disciples
- At first mention of Judas Iscariot, John tells reader Jesus knew he would betray him (John 6:70-71)

John

Jesus' Human Weaknesses Almost Disappear

Jesus approaching burial place of Lazarus:
no sense of petition / uncertainty in his
prayer (John 11:41-42):

- “Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.”

John

Jesus' Human Weaknesses Almost Disappear

John's passion account: Jesus in control:

- John 10:17-18: “. . . I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.” (NRSV)

John

Jesus' Human Weaknesses Almost Disappear

John's passion account: Jesus in control:

- Jesus does not pray as in Mark 14:35 that this hour might pass from him, but muses (John 12:27-28):

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – ‘Father, save me from his hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” (NRSV)

John

Jesus' Human Weaknesses Almost Disappear

John's passion account: Jesus in control:
Disciples do not flee; Jesus arranges for them to be let go so none are lost (John 18:8-9):

“Jesus answered, ‘I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.’ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, ‘I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me.’” (NRSV)

John

Jesus' Human Weaknesses Almost Disappear

Jesus does not die alone and abandoned:

- the Father is with Jesus
- his beloved disciple and his mother are at the foot of the cross

Last words a far cry from Mark and Matt.:

- John 19:28-30: “After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), ‘I am thirsty.’ . . . When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘It is finished.’ Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (NRSV)

Summary

All four gospel writers agree that Jesus during his ministry was Messiah and Son of God (no two-step Christology)

Each gospel gives a different emphasis in the tension between Jesus as fully human vs. Jesus as fully God.

- Jesus' servanthood and humanity, in decreasing order of emphasis: Mark, Luke, Matthew, John
- Jesus' divinity the most important message in John

Summary

“No one Gospel would enable us to see the whole picture, and only when the four are kept in tension among themselves has the church come to appreciate who Jesus is.”

- Father Brown

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“Christology:” the study of:

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- what role did he play in the God’s divine plan? (“functional” component)

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Views of Jesus in the Early Church Arising From Reflections on His Life Before He Began His Public Ministry

1. Family-Circle or Boyhood Christology
2. Conception Christology
3. Pre-existence Christology

Common Thrust: to show that “the identity of Jesus” manifested during his public ministry was a continuation of an identity that he had earlier.

Family-Circle or Boyhood Christology

We know very little of Jesus' boyhood and young adulthood prior to his public ministry

- Luke's story of Jesus at age 12 left behind in the Jerusalem Temple (Luke 2:41-51)
- the extracanonical *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* relates incidents in Jesus' life from ages 5-12 (ending with the story of Jesus in the temple found in Luke)
- John's story of the miracle at Cana – may actually have been a pre-ministry story

Family-Circle or Boyhood Christology

Jesus at Age 12 in the Temple

- Mary speaks of “your father [Joseph] and I”
- Jesus (first time he speaks in Luke) says she and Joseph should have known he would be in his Father’s house (or about his Father’s business
 - affirms he already has the identity subsequently expressed by the voice of God at his baptism “My Beloved Son.”

Family-Circle or Boyhood Christology

Jesus at Age 12 in the Temple

This story in Luke probably once stood by itself – Mary and Joseph should already know Jesus is the Son of God from the Nativity stories – but in this story they do not seem to understand when Jesus talks about his true Father in heaven

Family-Circle or Boyhood Christology

Infancy Gospel of Thomas

Late second century extracanonical gospel
relating stories of Jesus' childhood ages
5-12

Probably stories from popular imagination
Jesus:

- does “convenience” miracles (water for Mom; lengthens wood plank for Dad)
- heals boy with wounded foot;
resuscitates dead child
- makes birds out of clay that fly away (a “certain Jew” objects that he is working with clay on the Sabbath)

Family-Circle or Boyhood Christology Infancy Gospel of Thomas

Shows a tradition in the popular imagination that Jesus' ability to do miracles during his ministry was a power he also had as a child and did not begin after God called him "My Beloved Son" at his baptism.

Family-Circle or Boyhood Christology Miracle at Cana

John presents the Miracle at Cana (John 2:1-11) as occurring after Jesus' baptism and gathering of disciples – but it may actually be a story from before his baptism because:

- it takes place at Cana (Galilean town near Nazareth) before he goes to Capernaum (the base for his public ministry). In the other gospels, Jesus in his public ministry does not work miracles near Nazareth (see Mark 6:5)

Family-Circle or Boyhood Christology Miracle at Cana

- his mother is a central figure; his brothers are present
- fits in with the genre of stories in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* where Jesus performs “convenience” miracles for his family (his mother seems to expect he can do something about the wine shortage)

Family-Circle or Boyhood Christology Miracle at Cana

John 2:4: Jesus: “My hour has not yet come.” (NRSV)

- we later find his “hour” refers to the work of his Father

John 2:11: “Jesus did this . . . and revealed his glory. . .” (NRSV)

- we later find the nature of this glory in John 17:5 “So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.” (NRSV)

Family-Circle or Boyhood Christology Summary

Jesus was God's Son, not only from when John baptized, but also in his boyhood and young adulthood before he began his public ministry

Conception Christology

Luke's and Matthew's infancy stories (the only infancy stories we have in the gospels) are very different; they were likely composed independently

Common points in each:

- **Jesus' *human* identity: Son of David**
(he was a descendant of David because his legal father Joseph, was of the House of David)
- **Jesus' *divine* identity: Son of God** (he was conceived of Mary through the Holy Spirit without a human father)

Conception Christology

Jesus' Divine Identity in Matthew's Infancy Story

Matthew tells us that at his conception,

Jesus is:

- one who will save people from their sins (1:21),
- **Emmanuel** (“God is with Us” 1:23)
- God’s Son (2:15).

Returns to the **Emmanuel** identity at the end of the gospel when Jesus says after his Resurrection: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:20, NRSV)

Conception Christology

Jesus' Divine Identity in Luke's Infancy Story

Luke identifies Jesus as God's Son at conception, echoing the "Holy Spirit / Power" language of the pre-Pauline Resurrection Christology (a "two step" Christology) of Romans 1:3-4:

Jesus 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. . ." (NRSV)

Conception Christology

Jesus' Divine Identity in Luke's Infancy Story

Pre-Pauline Resurrection (“two-step”)

Christology:

- Jesus Son of David (“descended from David according to the flesh”); then:
- Jesus declared *Son of God* with *power* according to the *Holy Spirit* after his resurrection

Luke's Christology (Angel Gabriel to Mary Luke 1:34-35):

“The *Holy Spirit* will come upon you, and the *power* of the Most High will overshadow you, therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the *Son of God*.”

(NRSV)

Conception Christology

Jesus' Divine Identity in Luke's Infancy Story

Pre-Pauline Resurrection Christology: the two identities of Jesus are sequential:

- **Son of David**; *then* (after the resurrection)
- **Son of God**

Luke's Conception Christology: the two identities of Jesus are simultaneously present from conception:

- **Son of David** (Luke 1:32-33, echoing Nathan talking to David in 2 Samuel 7:9-16)
- **Son of God**

Conception Christology Summary

In Matthew and Luke, Jesus has the divine identity **Son of God** from the moment of conception

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus During the Time of
Moses and Abraham

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus During the Time of Moses and Abraham

Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4:

“ . . .our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.” (NRSV)

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus During the Time of Moses and Abraham

John 8:56-58:

(Jesus speaking to some Jews:) “ ‘Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad.’ Then the Jews said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty year old, and have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.’ ” (NRSV)

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation

Incarnation: means the “Son of God” was a being that previously existed in the divine realm before taking on flesh.

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (Colossians)

Colossians 1:15-20: (hymn that may have existed before Paul's letter):

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (NRSV)

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (Hebrews)

Christology in the Letter to the Hebrews:

- Heb. 4:14-15, 5:8: Christ “in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.” and “learned obedience through what he suffered.” (NRSV)
- Heb.10:5-10: describes thoughts of Christ entering the world and the body God has prepared for him

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (Hebrews)

Christology in the Letter to the Hebrews:

- Heb. 1:2-3: Christ present at creation: “. . . a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.” (NRSV)

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (John's Prologue)

Opening versus of the hymn of John's
Prologue (John 1:1-2)

- All things created through the Son (the Word or Logos of God)
- Son existed in God's presence *before* creation

Not intended figuratively:

- John 17:5: "So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed." (NRSV)
- also see John 16:28, 3:13, 5:19, 8:26, 8:58

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (Jesus & I AM in John)

The use of “I am” by Jesus in John. Greek

ego eimi has meanings / usages:

- 1. phrase of common speech meaning “It is I” or “I am the one”
- 2. sacred meaning in the Bible, Gnosticism and pagan Greek religious writings

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (Jesus & I AM in John)

Use of “I am” in the Old Testament:

- 1. expressions of divine authority:
 - e.g. Exod. 6:7: “You shall know that *I am* YHWH”
- 2. expressions of the oneness of God:
 - I am YHWH and there is no other:
Second Isaiah, Hosea 13:4, Joel 2:27
 - “I YHWH” and ‘I He’ of the Hebrew translated into Greek in the Septuagint simply as “I am” (*egō eimi*)

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (Jesus & I AM in John)

Use of “I am” in the Old Testament:

- 3. the divine name:

- e.g. Isa. 43:25: “I, I am He who blots out your transgressions. . .” (NRSV). In Greek Septuagint: *egō eimi egō eimi*. Could be read as “I am ‘I AM’ who blots out . . .”
- e.g. Isa. 52.6 “I am He who speaks:” In Greek Septuagint can be read as ‘I AM’ (*egō eimi*) speaks.

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (Jesus & I AM in John)

John's Jesus speaks like YHWH in Second Isaiah. Compare:

- Isa. 43:10: Greek Septuagint: "that you may know and believe me and understand 'I AM' (*egō eimi*)"
- John 8:28: ". . . then you will know 'I AM' (*egō eimi*)"

The absolute (that is, use without a predicate) of "I am" (*egō eimi*) in John portrays Jesus as like YHWH of the Old Testament (God, existing before creation)

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (Jesus & I AM in John)

John's absolute use of "I AM" may be an elaboration of an early tradition, hints of which can be found in the earlier Gospels (where it may be a play on the double meaning of *egō eimi*):

- e.g. Matt. 14:27; Mark 6:50: " 'I AM' (*egō eimi*); do not be afraid."
- e.g. Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8: "Many will come in my name, saying 'I AM' (*egō eimi*)"

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (The Incarnation in John)

The Importance of the Incarnation in John:

- only John explicitly describes an Incarnation: the Son of God (the Word, Logos) takes on human flesh in the form of Jesus Christ.

God's Supreme Act of Love:

- *Other New Testament Thought*: the self-giving seen in the crucifixion
- *John*: the sending of the Son into the world as a light to the world (i.e. the Incarnation)

Preexistence Christology

Existence of Jesus Before or At Creation (The Incarnation in John)

Two Paradigms of Salvation:

- Western Idea: *Via the crucifixion*.
Jesus' suffering and death on the cross defeats sin and allows us, through God's grace, to share in eternal life
- Eastern Idea: *Via the Incarnation*. "God became human so that we might become divine." (Maximus the Confessor, father of Byzantine Theology)

Summary of New Testament View of Jesus

Parousia or Second Coming Christology
(Jesus will be Lord / Messiah) when he comes again.

- wrong only if it is taken to mean Jesus does not become Messiah until the parousia

Resurrection Christology (Jesus is Messiah, Lord, Son of God through / at the Resurrection)

- wrong only if it is taken to mean Jesus did not become Messiah, Son of God until the Resurrection

Summary of New Testament View of Jesus

Ministry Christology (Jesus was God's Beloved Son through his public ministry)
- wrong only if it is taken to mean Jesus did not become God's Beloved Son until his baptism by John the Baptist)

Boyhood – Family Circle Christology (Jesus was Son of God as a boy / young adult) and **Conception Christology** (Jesus was Son of God at conception)
- wrong only if it is taken to mean Son of God did not exist until conception

Pre-existence Christology (Son of God existed at / before Creation)

Later Challenges to Christology

New Testament Period: thinkers described their Christology in terms of Jewish theological language

Second to Fourth Century: thinkers trained in Greek Philosophy began to ask questions about Christology in the language of their own developed and nuanced philosophy:

- **Arius** in the 4th century asked: did the Son of God, who was present at and before creation, ever have a beginning? (NT thinkers had not considered this question)

Later Challenges to Christology

Arius suggested that the Son of God did indeed have a beginning before creation

Athanasius argued in reply that the New Testament had resisted all temporal limitations in the identity of Jesus, and he prevailed at the **Council of Nicaea**:

- begotten not made
- never was a time when he was not
- true God of true God
- coeternal with the Father

Later Challenges to Christology

Twenty-First Century: thinkers trained in Modern Philosophy ask questions about Christology in the language of their own developed and nuanced philosophy (questions that those trained in Greek Philosophy never considered)

“In our times Christians are going to have to reach answers to new dilemmas in fidelity to God’s revelation in Christ; they can be helped in that if they have seen some examples of how their ancestors in the faith had to struggle to emerge with the answers now taken for granted.”

- Father Raymond Brown

Reference and Source

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