

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

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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

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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

**An Introduction to New Testament
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