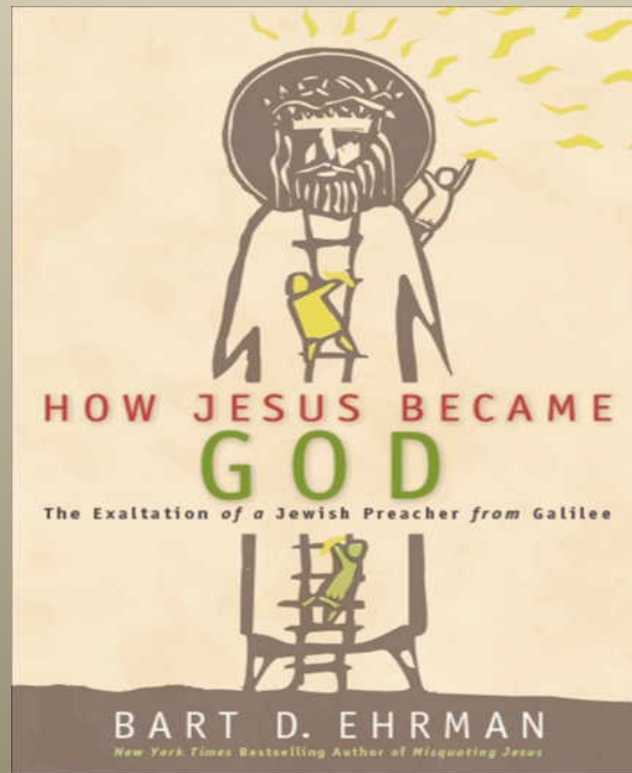


How Jesus Became God

L606 - OLLI Winter 2015

Presented by: Jack Dalby



One Remarkable Life

- His mother was told by a visitor from heaven that her son would not be a mere mortal, but divine.
- His birth was accompanied by divine signs in heaven.
- He left home to become an itinerant minister.
- He told villagers they should not be concerned about their earthly lives or material goods.
- He gathered followers who called him the Son of God.
- He healed the sick, cast out demons and raised the dead.
- At the end of his life, the Romans put him on trial.
- He ascended into heaven.
- He appeared later to doubting followers.
- Some of his followers wrote books about him

The Divine Continuum

Unlike our modern understanding about the gulf between God and man, gods and human beings mingled in the Greco Roman world. They did, however, believe in a divine hierarchy.

Powerful gods such as **Zeus or Jupiter** stood at the apex. On the next lower tier were great gods such as **Apollo and Athena**. In the next tier resides the **local gods**. In a still lower tier we have we have the “**daimones**.” These were less powerful divine beings who interacted with humans more often than the more powerful gods. Finally, we have the tier occupied by the rare **divine human**.

Three Models of the Divine Human

- 1) Gods Who Temporarily Become Human** (The Roman gods Jupiter and Mercury were said to have taken on mortal guise to walk the countryside.)
- 2) Divine Beings Born of a God and a Mortal** (Alexander was said to be the son of Zeus and a mortal woman.)
- 3) A Human Who Becomes Divine** (Julius Caesar was voted into divinity by the Roman Senate after his death.)

Divine Beings In Ancient Judaism

- Unlike pagans, Jews were monotheists.
- But there are other divine beings. The Hebrew Bible tells of angels, demons, cherubim and seraphim.
- They are far more powerful than humans, but they exist in a continuum of power. Some are more powerful than others.
- Some of the more powerful are the angels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.
- God alone was to be worshipped, but many Jews still paid honor and feared these other divine beings.

In The Beginning

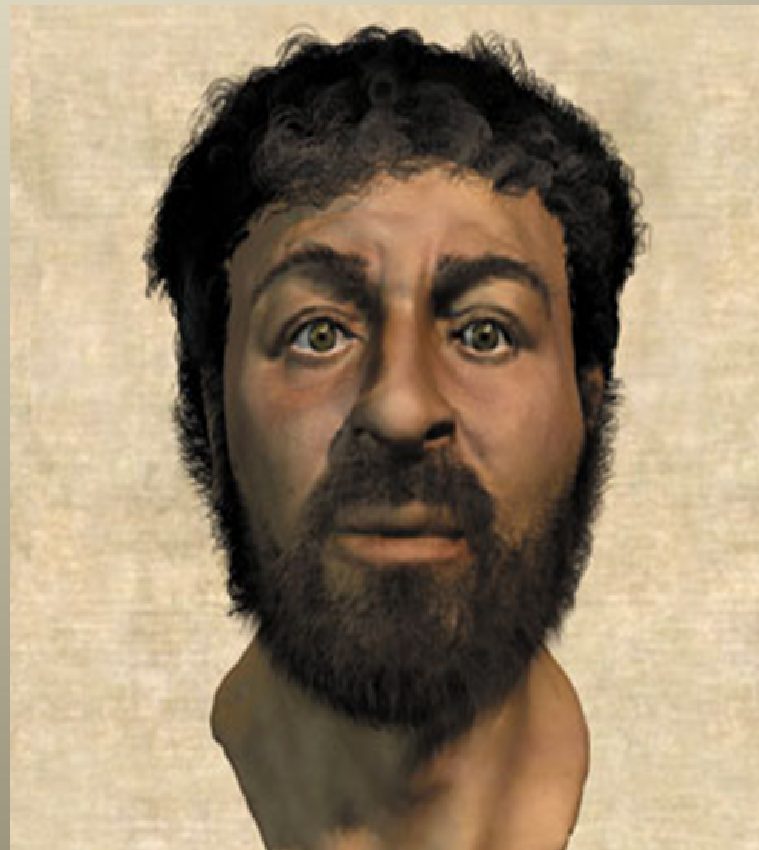
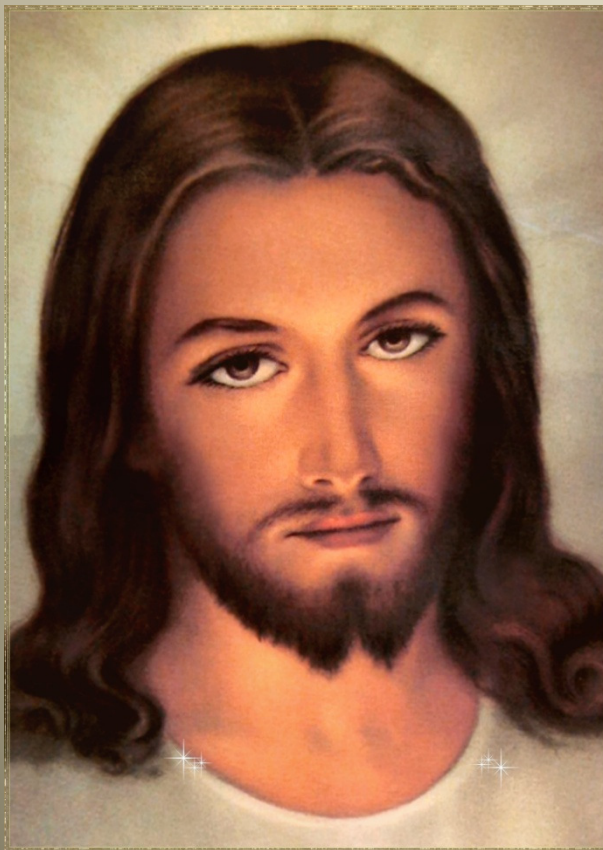
The divine realm is actually very crowded with supernatural entities. For example...

The Bible has a third creation model. In addition to the two in Genesis, there is one referenced in the Books of Isaiah, Psalms and Job. **In this version, the world is created in the aftermath of a great battle between God and what theologians say is a dragon in the waters called Rahab.** And Rahab is not the only mythical creature that either coexisted with God or was created by him. God plays with **a sea monster named Leviathan.** There are fiery serpents and flying serpents and a two-legged dragon with a rooster's head. In Genesis, the **"Sons of God"** marry the "daughters of man" and have children; **the "sons of God" are angels,** as is made clear in the Books of Job and Psalms. – Newsweek 1/2/15

How Did Jesus Become God?

Rather than ask, “Did the earliest Christians believe that Jesus was God?,” we need to rephrase the question slightly and ask, “**In what sense did the earliest Christians think of Jesus as God?**” – Bart Ehrman, How Jesus Became God

The Jesus Of History



The Problem

"It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that historical Jesus research is a very safe place to do theology and call it history, to do autobiography and call it biography."

John Dominic Crossan

Our Sources: The Letters of Paul

- Paul is credited with writing 13 letters. They account for nearly half of the New Testament's 27 books.
- Undisputed: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon
- Deutero-Pauline Epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians
- Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus

Our Sources: The Synoptic Gospels

- The term synoptic comes from the Greek syn, meaning "together", and optic, meaning "seen".
- The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they include many of the same stories, often in the same sequence, and the same wording, indicating a literary interdependence when they are **seen together**.

Problems With Gospel Sources

- We have no original copies of any of the gospels.
- The gospels were written 35-70 years after the events they describe.
- Jesus spoke Aramaic. The gospels were written in Greek. The gospels are translations.
- The gospels were written anonymously and by multiple authors.
- Scholars believe that the narrative and timeline of Jesus' life were created by the author(s) of Mark.
- Readers tend to harmonize the Gospels.

An Historian's View

The canonical and non-canonical Gospels provide **indirect and second-hand evidence** concerning the historical activity of Jesus. They pose extraordinary problems to those asking historical questions.

“The most accessible level of meanings in the Gospels is that shaped by the respective evangelists. Getting at the earlier traditions they used is more difficult; **harder still is finding the facts about Jesus.**”

Professor Luke Timothy Johnson – “Early Christianity”

New Testament Back Dating

John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, **and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.** "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." – Mark 1:6-8

New Testament Back Dating

“He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. - Luke 24:44-47

Additions To The New Testament

It would appear that several important biblical verses were tacked on at later dates. Here are three examples: **1 John 5:7** (“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”); **Luke 22:20** (“Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you”); and **Luke 24:51** (“And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven”). These first appeared in manuscripts used by the translators who created the King James Bible, **but are not in the Greek copies from hundreds of years earlier.** – Newsweek 1/2/15

How We Remember

Remembering is not like reading a book but rather like writing a book. If there are blanks, we fill them in.

Because human memory “leaks and dissociates,” all of us are to one degree or another, fabulists, even when we try not to be. **As modern research abundantly documents, memory often leads us astray.** Among its many sins are the following, all of which matter for sober, honest study of Jesus.

- Dale Allison, Constructing Jesus

The Problems With Memory

1. Long-term memory is reconstructive as well as reproductive and so involves imagination.
2. Post event information often becomes incorporated into memory, supplementing and altering a person's recollection.
3. We are apt to project present circumstances and biases onto our past experiences.
4. Memories are not evergreen. They become less and less distinct as the past recedes.
5. Memories are subject to sequential displacement. We often move remembered events forward and backward in time.
6. Memories are a function of self-interest. We revise them in order to help maintain a meaningful sense of self-identity.
7. Groups do not rehearse competing memories that fail to shore up what they hold dear.
8. No infallible inner voice or sense can consistently adjudicate the accuracy of our recall.

Oral Traditions

It's rather clear from the way that the stories develop in the gospels that the Christians who are writing the gospels a generation after the death of Jesus are doing so from **a stock of oral memory, that is, stories that had been passed down probably by followers**. But if we think about the death of Jesus and remember a group of people who would have still been attached to him and to his memory after his death, it must have been a rather stark and traumatic period of time. **Many of their initial hopes and expectations had been dashed**. All of this talk of the kingdom of God arriving soon seemed to be disconfirmed with his death. - L. Michael White, Director of Religious Studies, University of Texas

Preference For Oral Tradition

“I also will not hesitate to draw up for you, along with these expositions, an orderly account of all the things I carefully learned and have carefully recalled from the elders; for I have certified their truth...

Whenever someone arrived who had been a companion of one of the elders, I would carefully inquire after their words, what Andrew or Peter had said, or what Philip or what Thomas had said, or James or John or Matthew or any of the other disciples of the Lord...**For I did not suppose that what came out of books would benefit me as much as that which came from a living and abiding voice.**” – Papias, The Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord (120-40 CE)

The Gospel Of Mark

- The Gospel of Mark is our earliest gospel.
- It was written around 65-70 CE.
- The authorship is unknown.
- Mark took oral and perhaps written stories of Jesus and created a narrative.
- Mark's message is to establish Jesus as the messiah sent from God to fulfill the Jewish scriptures.
- Jesus' followers struggle to grasp who he is.
- The “**messianic secret**” describes Jesus' desire to keep his identity secret.

The Gospel Of Matthew

- The Gospel of Matthew was written around 80-85CE.
- The Gospel of Matthew is anonymous.
- Matthew copied/edited much of the Gospel of Mark.
- It contains additional stories from “Q” and “M.”
- He adds several important stories including Jesus’ genealogy, his birth and the Sermon on the Mount.
- Matthews main emphasis is the Jewishness of Jesus, the importance of following Jewish law and the fact that **Jesus is fulfilling Old Testament prophecy.**
- Ironically, Matthew also passionately attacks Jewish leaders.

The Gospel Of Luke

- The Gospel of Luke is believed to have been written after the Gospel of Matthew, around 85-90CE.
- Like Matthew and Mark, Luke is anonymous.
- It is a 2-volume set, with the Acts of the Apostles.
- Luke uses many of the stories found in Mark.
- It contains additional stories from “Q” and “L.”
- Luke presents different birth and genealogy stories.
- Luke presents the only childhood story of Jesus.
- Luke may have been a gentile.
- Luke’s emphasis is on **how salvation moved from Jews to non-Jews**. He portrays Jesus as a prophet.

“Q”

The Q source, (from the German *Quelle*, meaning "source") is a hypothetical written collection of sayings of Jesus defined as **the common material found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke**, but not in their other written source, the Gospel of Mark. According to this hypothesis, this ancient text was based on the Oral Traditions of the Early Church. – Wikipedia, 9/21/13

The Gospel Of John

- The Gospel of John was written around 95 CE.
- Its authorship is unknown.
- Unlike his 1 year ministry in the synoptics, Jesus preaches for nearly 3 years in the Gospel of John.
- The gospel follows a similar plot line but uses different stories.
- It is thought that this gospel was written for Jews who believed Jesus was the messiah, but had been excluded from their local synagogue.
- Unlike the synoptics, Jesus is portrayed as divine, the pre-existent word of God.

Christian Claim On The Torah

“In this way, everything that was said of ancient Israel, and all the promises made to it, were transferred to the Christians, who claimed that they, and not the Jews, were the ancient people of God.

This transference...was probably almost as important for the future history of Christianity as the change which made Jesus the center of a cult offering private salvation, instead of the prophetic herald of the Kingdom of Heaven at the End of the Age. It meant that Christianity shared with Judaism the advantage, which no other religion in the Empire had, of being a religion with a book.” – Kirsopp Lake, Landmarks in the History of Early Christianity

Josephus

At this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man **if indeed one should call him a man, for** he was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. **He was the Messiah .** And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. **For he appeared to them on the third day, living again, just as the divine prophets had spoken of these and countless other wondrous things about him.** And up until this very day the tribe of Christians, named after him, has not died out. – Antiquities 18:3.3 (circa 90 CE)

Non-Christian Sources

- The first is from 112 CE, from the Roman Governor, Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan

“...they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and **sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god**, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so... Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. **But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.** “

Non-Christian Sources

- The next comes from 115 CE, from the Roman historian, Tacitus:

"Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace.

Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular."

How To Proceed

Rather than trying to identify individual sayings and actions that can be proven authentic beyond reasonable doubt, **we should focus first and foremost on the overall impression the sources give.** If they were unable to preserve the gist intact, after all, then the chances of them having preserved *details* with accuracy become vanishingly small. And even if a particular detail in the Gospels is a summary by the author rather than a saying of Jesus himself, it may give us an accurate impression. **Even fabricated material may provide a true sense of the gist of what Jesus was about,** however inauthentic it may be as far as the specific details are concerned. – Dale Allison, Methodology from Constructing Jesus

1st Century Palestine

- Illiteracy rates may have been 85-95%. It was a time of magic, miracles, gods and very early death.
- Jews were under foreign control most of the eight centuries before the birth of Jesus.
- Jews in Jesus day were required to pay taxes to Rome.
- Unlike other conquered people, Jews were not required to be Roman soldiers or worship Roman Gods.
- Many Jews came to believe that God was soon to intervene on their behalf.

1st Century Palestine

- There developed a Jewish ideology called **apocalypticism**.
- This evil age was controlled by cosmic forces opposed to God, who were gaining in strength.
- God would eventually intervene in the course of history to overthrow the forces of evil.
- God would then raise the dead for judgment, bringing in a new age in which justice would reign.
- The appearance of God's kingdom would happen very soon.
- John the Baptist, Jesus, the Apostles and Paul were apocalyptic.

How Modern Historians See Jesus

Most scholars in both the United States and Europe over the past century have been convinced that the Jesus of history is best understood as a **Jewish eschatological, apocalyptic prophet** who anticipated that God was soon to intervene in history to overthrow the powers of evil now controlling this world in order to bring in a new order here on earth, **the kingdom of God**.

The Life Of Jesus

- Jesus was born c. 6-4 BCE, near the time of the death of Herod the Great.
- He spent his childhood and early adult years in Nazareth, a Galilean village.
- He was baptized by John the Baptist.
- He called disciples.
- He taught in towns, villages and the countryside of Galilee (apparently not in cities).
- He was known to be a healer and exorcist.
- He preached the coming “Kingdom of God.”
- About the year 30 he went to Jerusalem for Passover.

The Life Of Jesus

- He created a disturbance in the Temple area.
- He had a final meal with the disciples.
- He was arrested and interrogated by Jewish authorities, specifically the high priest.
- He was executed on the orders of the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate, for claiming to be the “King of the Jews.”
- His disciples abandoned him but were not arrested or executed.
- His disciples saw him (in some sense) after his death.
- As a consequence, they believed that he would return to found the Kingdom of God.
- They formed a community to await his return and sought converts to their faith in Jesus as God's Messiah.

E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*
Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*

The Family Of Jesus

- **Father:** Joseph, described as a "tekton"; traditionally taken to mean "carpenter", though the Greek term evokes an artisan with wood, iron or stone.
- **Mother:** Mary, was betrothed to Joseph when she conceived Jesus. The betrothal would have taken place when she was in her early teens.
- **Brothers:** James, Joseph (Joses), Judas and Simon.
- **Sisters:** Mentioned but not named.

Siblings, Cousins Or Step Children?

“In the NT there is not a single clear case where (the Greek word for brother: adelpos) “brother” means “cousin” or “stepbrother.” This is the natural sense in Paul, Mark and John.”

Paul’s usage is particularly important because...he is not writing about past events handed down to him. He speaks of the brother(s) of the Lord as people he has known and met...And Pauline tradition knew perfectly well the word for “cousin.”

“If the historian or exegete is asked to render a judgment on the NT texts we have examined, viewed simply as historical sources, **the most probable opinion is that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were true siblings.**” – John Meier, A Marginal Jew, Vol. 1

The Teachings Of Jesus

- Jesus taught about the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God.
- The Kingdom's arrival would be heralded by a cosmic figure called The Son of Man.
- To prepare for God's judgment, all Jews needed to follow the Torah and repent of their sins.
- Jesus offered an immediate and direct route to God's love and mercy.
- God's judgment would bring about a total reversal of the social order. Those in power (the forces of evil) would be removed, and the oppressed would be exalted. "The first shall be last and the last first." – Mark 10:30
- For Jesus, these were not long term ethical commandments. The end was very close and this was how all Jews were to prepare.

Jesus' Teachings Questioned

“Where did this man get these things?
What is the wisdom given to him? How are such
mighty works done by his hands? **Is not this the
carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James
and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his
sisters here with us?” And they took offense at
him.** — Mark 6:3

Jesus' Teachings Questioned

“Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, He is out of his mind.” – Mark 3:20-21

What Is The Kingdom Of God?

- God has allowed human history to run its course with little interference. One day, he will bring history to an end and **govern the world perfectly**.
- The Kingdom is already present, in some sense, in Jesus' ministry, but is yet to be fully realized.
- As Jesus told John the Baptist, his healings, exorcisms and preaching are proof that he is ushering in the Kingdom of God.

The Coming Son Of Man

"And in those days, after the affliction, the sun will grow dark and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the sky will be shaken; and then they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send forth his angels and he will gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of earth to the end of heaven.... Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place."

Mark 13:24-27

Jesus' Role In The Kingdom

“Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”... Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Matthew 19:24-30

Who Is A Son of God?

In a Jewish context, 'Son of God' does not mean 'more than human.' It means you are in special relationship with God.

Who Is A Messiah?

A messiah is a savior or liberator of a the Jewish people. In the Hebrew Bible **a messiah is a king or High Priest** traditionally anointed with holy anointing oil. In later Jewish messianic tradition and eschatology, a messiah is a leader anointed by God, and in some cases, a future King of Israel, physically descended from the Davidic line, **who will rule the united tribes of Israel and herald the Messianic Age.**

The Greek translation for 'Messiah' is khristos, **Anglicized as Christ.**

Did Jesus Found A Church?

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, **and upon this rock I will build my church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” – Matt 16:16-18

“Serious arguments weigh heavily in favor of this passage **coming from a post-Easter situation in the church**. It is part of Matthew’s overall redaction and expansion of Mark’s version of Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi. - John Meier, A Marginal Jew, Vol 3.

Did Jesus Think He Was God?

“As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? **No one is good except God alone.**” – Mark 10:17-18

Did Jesus Think He Was Divine?

Dale Martin - Professor of Religious Studies Yale University

43:55-49:10



Belief In Jesus As The Messiah

There are reasons to believe that some of Jesus' followers **thought of him as the messiah during his lifetime**, not simply afterward. And there are further reasons for thinking that **Jesus himself said he was the messiah**... This is very surprising, given the fact that as far as we can tell, Jesus did nothing during his life to make anyone think that he was the anointed one.

- Bart Ehrman, How Jesus Became God

Why Was Jesus Crucified?

“Jesus was an eschatological prophet. He thought that God was going to destroy the Temple. Jesus probably thought that in the new age, when the twelve tribes of Israel were again assembled, there would be a new and perfect Temple, built by God himself. That was standard eschatological thinking.”

- E. P. Sanders, The Historical Figure of Jesus

“To have somebody preaching that the Kingdom of God was really on its way, perhaps ... within that very holiday...[is]the equivalent of shouting, "Fire!" in a crowded theater. It would be enough to get somebody in trouble. “ - Paula Fredriksen Professor, Boston University

The Resurrection



When Does Christianity Begin?

“Christianity is born, **not as a direct result of Jesus’ teachings**, but as a result of what God is claimed to have done through his death and resurrection.”

- 1)The Jesus movement during his life was disorganized.
- 2)Jesus died without the presence of his disciples.
- 3)Jesus’ teachings are paradoxical, not systematic.
- 4)Christianity begins with the resurrection experience.

Luke Timothy Johnson – Early Christianity

Where Did The Resurrection Take Place?

Only Luke's gospel places the Apostles in Jerusalem after the Crucifixion. All the others say they went to back to Galilee. It was there that the resurrection appearances took place.

“The conjecture that **the apostles fled to Galilee** after the crucifixion makes sense in that they would have feared for their own lives and wanted to return to familiar territory as quickly as possible.” – Jeffrey Butz, “The Brother of Jesus”

Historicity of the Resurrection

“...nothing would prohibit a conscientious historian from steering clear of both theological and anti-theological assumptions and simply adopting phenomenological approach to the data, which do not demand any particular interpretation. To content oneself with observing that **the disciples’ experiences, whether hallucinatory or not, were genuine experiences that they took to originate outside their subjectivity?**” – Dale Allison, Resurrecting Jesus

The Resurrection - Paul

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: **that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures**, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, **and last of all he appeared to me also**, as to one abnormally born.

– 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

The Resurrection - Mark

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him...And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. And entering the tomb, **they saw a young man** sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that **he is going before you to Galilee**. There you will see him, just as he told you.” And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, **and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.**

— Mark 16:1-8

The Resurrection - Matthew

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, **for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.** His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, **for he has risen, as he said.** Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, **he is going before you to Galilee;** there you will see him. See, I have told you.”

So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. **And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!”** And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.” – Matt 28:1-10

The Resurrection - Luke

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. **And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb**, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, **behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel**. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. **Remember how he told you**, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.”

And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, **but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them**. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened...

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. **But their eyes were kept from recognizing him**. – Luke 24:1-16

The Resurrection - John

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb... Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth... Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; **for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.** Then the disciples went back to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb,... And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain... They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, **but she did not know that it was Jesus... Supposing him to be the gardener,** she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away...” Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, **‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’**” – John 20:1-18

The Doubt Tradition

- Jesus appears to no one in Mark.
- Matthew 28:17 states Jesus appeared to the eleven, but “**some doubted.**”
- In Luke 24:10-11, the women’s story of the risen Jesus is dismissed by the disciples as an “**idle tale.**”
- When he does appear to them, Luke 24:37-42, he has to **prove he is not a spirit** by letting them touch him and finally eat some fish.
- In John, Peter and the beloved disciple **do not believe** Mary Magdalene that the tomb is empty. Later in John 20:24-28, Jesus has to show his wounds and even let Thomas inspect the wounds.
- In Acts 1:3, Jesus spends 40 days with his disciples offering “**many proofs**” that he was alive.

The Ascension



Jesus Exalted To Heaven

“Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, **he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.** And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

– Luke 24:50-53

What Is Christology?

Christology is the field of study within Christian theology which is primarily **concerned with the nature and person of Jesus** as recorded in the canonical Gospels and the epistles of the New Testament. Primary considerations include the relationship of Jesus' nature and person with the nature and person of God.

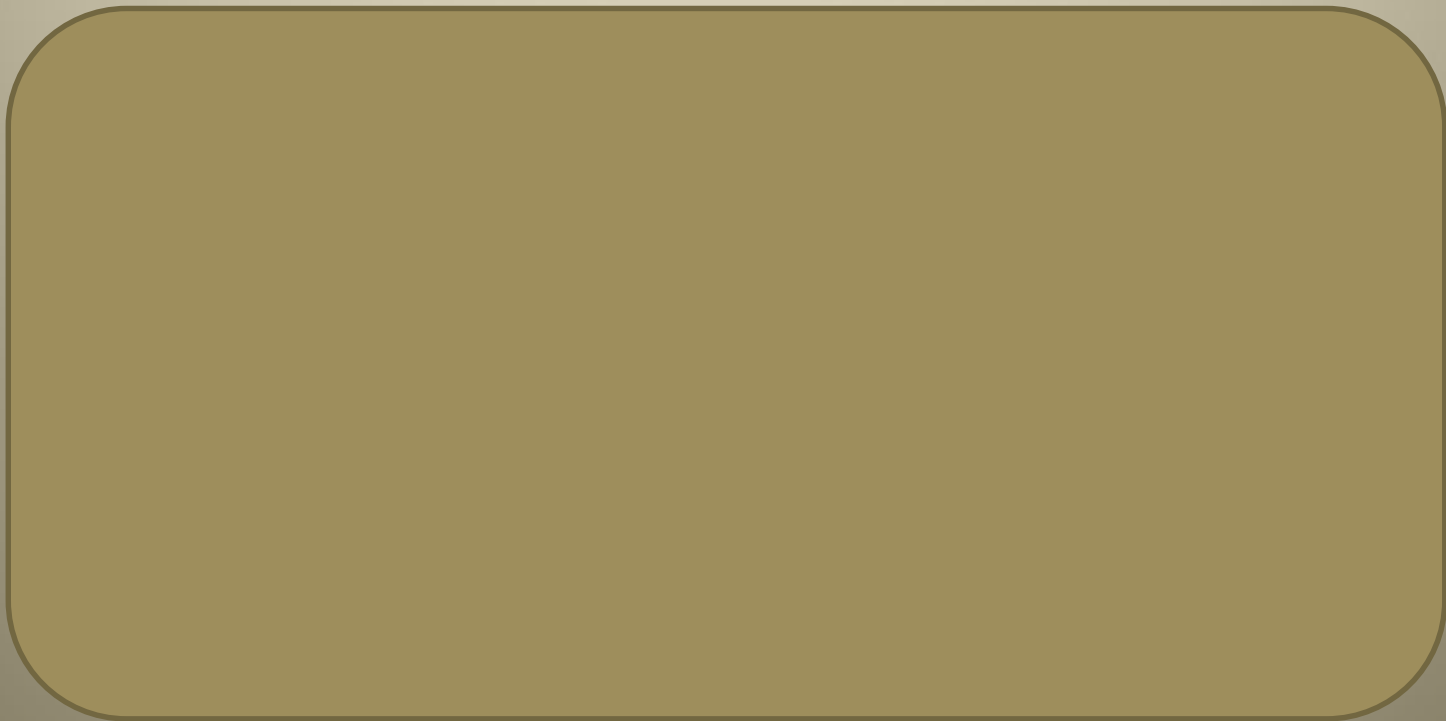
- Wikipedia, 9/14

The Earliest Christology

- As apocalyptic Jews, the disciples believed that Jesus was the “first fruits” of the general resurrection.
- They believed that God had taken Jesus up into heaven.
- God had exalted Jesus to his right hand in a position of authority.
- He was the unique son of God.
- Jesus was to come from heaven to judge the earth. He took on the role originally given to the Son of Man.
- Jesus would destroy all God’s enemies, then turn the world over to God.
- Jesus is now clearly divine, but in this early period, he is not understood to be God the Father.
- He is a god, but in what sense?

The Jesus Movement

9:00 – 14.37



Acts Of The Apostles Begins

In the first book, Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. **He presented himself alive** to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and **speaking about the kingdom of God**.

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem....- Acts 1: 1-4

Pentecost



Pentecost

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. **And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.** And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven...And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?

...But others mocking said, “**They are filled with new wine.**” But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. — Acts 2:1-16

The Church Of Jerusalem

In conformity with Jesus' command not to approach Gentiles, **all potential candidates were Jewish**. They were to continue following the Law of Moses, but must also accept the proclamation that Jesus was the promised messiah whose death, resurrection and return would inaugurate the arrival of God's everlasting Kingdom.

“It is remarkable to note that the concept of the church as an institution intended to continue the mission of Jesus, or the ceremony of baptism as a gateway into the community are completely absent from the Gospels of Mark and Luke, and appear only on three odd occasions in Matthew.” – Geza Vermes, *Christian Beginnings*

Who Led the Early Church?

Despite Church tradition, it is James, the brother of Jesus, not Peter, who was the leader of the Jerusalem church.

“The Acts of the Apostles provides evidence that James was an important figure in the Christian community of Jerusalem. When Peter must flee Jerusalem, he asks that James be informed .

When the Christians of Antioch are concerned over whether Gentile Christians need be circumcised to be saved, it is James who plays a prominent role in the formulation of the Church council's decision. Indeed, after Peter and Paul have made their case, it is James who finally delivers what he calls his "judgment," and afterwards, all accept it. **James, in other words, is shown in charge of the Jerusalem group, which conflicts with later claims of Peter's primacy there.**” — Wikipedia,

6/14/13

Paul



Sources for the Historical Paul

We have two sources for the Historical Paul: the 13 letters he is said to have written and the Book of Acts; the second part of the Gospel of Luke.

However, “available sources about Paul’s life are **riddled with historical inaccuracies**. Scholars believe that only 7 of the 13 letters in the New Testament were actually by Paul, and that the accounts of his life in the Acts of the Apostles are not completely reliable.” — Dale Martin, Yale Religious Studies

The Letters of Paul

- Paul is credited with writing 13 letters. They account for nearly half of the New Testament's 27 books.
- Undisputed: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon
- Deutero-Pauline Epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians
- Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus

The Acts Of The Apostles

- Our other source for St. Paul.
- Written by the anonymous other of Luke.
- Acts picks up the story of Jesus after his ascension.
- It deals with the spread of Christianity throughout the Mediterranean world, and the evolution of the religion from all Jewish to the inclusion of Gentiles.
- Paul is the hero of Acts.

Paul's Biography: His Letters

- He calls himself a Hebrew and a zealous Pharisee.
- He persecuted the Jesus movement.
- Around 37 CE, Paul “sees” the risen Jesus. He receives his gospel from Jesus and his call to serve the non-Jewish world.
- He makes three trips to Jerusalem. The first is three years after his apostolic call. He meets Peter and James, but none of the other apostles.
- The second trip is 14 years after his call when he appears before the Jerusalem leadership to explain his gospel and mission to the Gentiles.
- During his third trip he was apparently arrested and sent to Rome under guard.

Paul's Biography: His Letters

- Paul claimed many revelations from Jesus including direct voice communications and an ascent to the highest level of heaven.
- He had a physical disability sent by Satan.
- He claimed to have worked signs and mighty works that confirmed his apostleship.
- He was unmarried during his missionary days.
- He experienced numerous occasions of persecution including beatings, stoning's and a shipwreck.
- He worked as a manual laborer to support himself.
- He was imprisoned, probably in Rome around 60 CE and refers to his possible execution.

Paul's Biography: The Book of Acts

- Paul's Hebrew name was Saul. He was born in Tarsus a city in modern day Turkey.
- He came from a family of Pharisees and had a sister and nephew that lived in Jerusalem.
- He was born a Roman citizen.
- He had some role in the death of Stephen, the first member of the Jesus group to be executed.
- He was sent to Damascus to further persecute the Jesus movement when he has his vision of the risen Jesus.
- He worked as a tentmaker or leather worker.

Paul Persecutes Christians

For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how **I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it**. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, **so extremely zealous was I** for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order **that I might preach him among the Gentiles**, I did not immediately consult with anyone; **nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me**. - Gal. 1:13-17

Paul's Conversion: His Letters

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, **and last of all he appeared to me also**, as to one abnormally born. – 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, **I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.**
- Galatians 1:11-16

Paul's Conversion: Acts of the Apostles

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and **heard** a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; **they heard the sound but did not see anyone.** Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. – Acts 9:3-9

Why Do We Need Salvation?

“Paul’s logic seems to run like this:

in Christ, God has acted to save the world;
therefore the world is in need of salvation; but
God also gave the law; is the law then against the
purpose of God which has been revealed in
Christ? No, it has the function of consigning
everyone to sin so that everyone could be saved
by God’s grace in Christ.” – E.P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian

Judaism

Atonement for Our Sins

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, **that Christ died for our sins** in accordance with the scriptures...”

– 1 Cor. 15:3

“It is well known that Paul inherited the view that Christ died for our trespasses. The general Christian view was that presumably by his death he achieved atonement for the trespasses of others”...going back to the sin of Adam. – E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism

Baptism

- In Judaism, immersion into water was intended to wash away **ritual impurity**.
- John the Baptist administered a more spiritual baptism. John's baptism symbolized the removal of pollution by **sinful conduct**.
- Paul's baptism had a more **mystical meaning**. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." – Rom. 6:3-4

Being “In Christ”

Paul uses this phrase 50 times in his genuine letters. It is used nowhere else in the New Testament.

For Paul, Christ was a cosmic figure, no longer the historical Jesus who was “born of a woman.” He speaks of having “faith in Jesus” a few times, but never being “in Jesus,” only of being “in Christ.” Paul says, “From now on, therefore, we regard no one (of our group) according to the flesh, even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him such no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” –

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

Righteoused By Faith

We do not have the English words to accurately translate many of the key Greek phrases in Paul's writings.

Often **mistranslated as "justification by faith,"** being righteoused by faith is Paul's way of describing Gentile's relationship with God.

Paul argues that God required of Gentiles only acceptance of the God of Israel and of Jesus as savior. Gentiles would then be "righteoused by faith."

Martin Luther famously coined the phrase, "justification by faith alone." This required believers to acknowledge their sinful lives and to admit that under sin, it was impossible to do good work. Church sacraments were of no use. Only a belief in the Gospel of Christ could save.

The Lord's Supper

“For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, he also took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” – 1

Corinthians 14:22-24

Paul and the Spirit World

Like many Jews, Paul believed that both angels and demons were active in the world, helping and hindering humanity.

“The things the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God. **And I would rather you not have communion with demons.** You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and the table of demons.”

- 1 Cor. 10:20-21

Jesus As Christ

The honorific term most frequently applied by Paul to Jesus is **Christos** (270 times in his seven undisputed letters).

Most frequently, Paul uses Christos on its own to refer to Jesus. Other combinations are “Christ Jesus,” “Jesus Christ,” “Jesus Christ our Lord” and “Our/the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jesus' Divine Sonship

Paul refers to Jesus as God's “Son” fifteen times in his seven undisputed letters.

Based on modern studies of pre-Christian Judaism, it seems as if “divine sonship” originally referred to the messianic role of Davidic kings.

In this usage, Jesus' divine sonship does not denote divinity, but his special status and relationship to God.

Jesus As Lord

Paul refers to Jesus as **Kyrios** (Lord) 180 times in his undisputed letters. The title serves three primary functions:

- 1) Designating Jesus as Lord/Master whose teaching is authoritative.
- 2) In eschatological expectations as the one who will come again as God's agent.
- 3) Designating Jesus' unequaled status given by God.

Did Paul Think Jesus Was God?

To be sure, as others have noted earlier, there is a remarkably close linkage of Jesus and God in Paul's letters. But, at the same time, there is an almost equally emphatic affirmation that there are *two*— God and Jesus— and Jesus is consistently described with reference to God, not replacing God but serving as **the one sent forth by God and acting as God's unique agent of redemption**. That is, we have two figures posited and a clear relationship between them. — Professor Larry Hurtado Blog, 6/14

Paul Says Jesus is Preexistent

“Who, although **he was in the form of God**

Did not regard being equal with God

Something to be grasped after.

But he emptied himself

Taking on the form of a slave,

And **coming in the likeness of humans.**

And being found in appearance as a human

He humbled himself

Becoming obedient unto death – even death
on a cross...” - Philippians 2:6-11

Paul Says Jesus Is Not Preexistent

“Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, which he announced in advance through his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was **descended from the seed of David according to the flesh**, who was appointed Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness **by his resurrection** from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.” – Romans 1:3-4

What Did Paul Really Think?

“One sees that it is impossible to derive from Paul’s letters anything approaching one single doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ. It is possible that both the passages just quoted are **pre-Pauline in origin**, in which case they show that he drew on, rather than composed, quite diverse statements, one offering a “**low**” Christology, the other a “**high**” Christology.”

– E.P. Sanders, Paul: A Brief Insight

Were Paul's Views Normative?

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them...the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, **in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain**. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. **Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy** out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery— **to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment**... And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say,...added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised..., and when James and Cephas and John, **the so-called pillars**, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. – Gal. 2:1-9

Were Paul's Views Normative?

But when Cephas came to Antioch, **I opposed him to his face**, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, **fearing the circumcision party**. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that **even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy**. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?" – Gal. 2:11-14

The Second Coming

“We who are alive, who are left until the appearance of the Lord, will not proceed those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a command, with the voice of an archangel, and with a trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ will rise first, **then we who are alive...will be snatched up with them in the clouds to greet the Lord in the air.**” – Thess. 4.15-17

The Final Duty of Christ

“The comes the end, when (Christ) delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last to be destroyed is death.” – 1 Cor. 15:24-26

The Parousia Delayed



What Is The Parousia?

- Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? **This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.**" —Acts 1:9-11
- **The coming of Christ will be instantaneous and worldwide.** "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." —Matthew 24:27
- **The coming of Christ will be visible to all.** "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." —Matthew 24:30
- **The coming of Christ will be audible.** "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." —Matthew 24:31
- **The resurrection of the righteous will occur.** "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."—1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

The Early Church's Response

Apocalyptic fervor can only be maintained for so long. From our earliest sources, we see that the disciples had to be constantly on the ready for the Parousia, an event that could strike quick as lightning.

Christians and critics were told not to get hung up on imminence because for God, “one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.”

– 2 Pet. 3:3-4

The hope for an impending Second Coming stayed alive for over 100 years, until the middle of the second century. By that time, expectations had cooled to such a point that the idea of the Parousia was virtually removed from the Christian community.

The Didache



The Didache

Lost for centuries, a Greek manuscript of the Didache was rediscovered in 1873.

The Didache or The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles, is a brief early Christian treatise dated by **most scholars to the late first or early 2nd Century**.

The first line of this treatise is "*Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles (or Nations) by the Twelve Apostles*". The text has three main sections dealing with Christian ethics, rituals such as baptism and Eucharist and Church organization.

Believed to be written by a Jewish author, **the work was considered by some of the Church Fathers as part of the New Testament, but rejected as spurious or non-canonical by others**, eventually not accepted into the New Testament canon. – Wikipedia, 9/4/13

How The Didache Sees Jesus

The Jesus of the Didache is essentially the Servant of God, the great eschatological teacher who is expected to reappear soon to gather together...the members of his church to the Kingdom of God.

The ideas of atonement and redemption are nowhere visible in this earliest record of Jewish-Christian life. Nor can one find any hint at the sacrificial character of Jesus death. – Geza Vermes, Christian Beginnings

The Didache On The End Times

Be careful how you live. Do not let your lamps be quenched, nor your loins ungirdled, but be ready, **for you do not know the hour our Lord will come**...for your whole time as a believer will come to nothing if you are found to be imperfect at the end time.

In the last days the false prophets and corrupters shall multiply...and then the deceiver of the world will appear as a Son of God, performing signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered into his hands. He will do things more unholy than any since the beginning of the world.

All of humanity shall come to the fire of testing, and many will fall and perish. But all who endure in their faith shall be saved from the Curse. Then the signs of the truth will appear: firstly a rift in the heavens, **then the sound of a trumpet, and thirdly the resurrection of the dead**. But not all will rise, because, as it is said, 'The Lord shall come, and all his saints with him'. Then the world will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven. – Christian History Institute, 9/4/13

The Pagan World

Vol. 4 1:45-5:00



Orthodoxy and Heresy

Orthodoxy means the “right belief.”

Heresy means “choice,” as in the choice *not* to believe the “right belief.”

Heterodoxy is a synonym for heresy meaning “different belief,” or a belief different than the “right belief.”

How Varied Was Early Christianity?

“Yet even the fifty-two writings discovered at Nag Hammadi offer only a glimpse of the complexity of the early Christian movement. We now begin to see that what we call Christianity ...**actually represents only a small selection of specific sources**, chosen from among dozens of others. Now, for the first time, we have the opportunity to find out about the earliest Christian heresy; for the first time, the heretics can speak for themselves.” – Elaine Pagels, “The Gnostic Gospels”

Views of Jesus in the Early Church

There were numerous views of Christ throughout the second and third centuries. Some of Jesus's followers thought he was a **human but was not (by nature) divine**; others thought he was **divine but not human**; others thought he was **two different beings**, one human and one divine; yet others - the side that won these debates - maintained that he was **human and divine at the same time**. Bart Ehrman; How Jesus Became God

People of The Book

One of the distinctive features of early Christianity, in all its guises, was its literary character. Literature served to provide sacred authority of Christian belief and practice, to defend the religion against its cultured despisers, to unite communities of believers...to instruct how to live, to entertain with accounts of heroes of the faith...With the partial exception of Judaism, no other religion of the Roman Empire was so rooted in literary texts. – Bart Ehrman, Lost Christianities

Who Were The Ebionites?

A Jewish Christian movement that existed during the early centuries of the Christian Era, we only know of the Ebionites through the writings of their enemies.

Hippolytus mentions them in his work, Refutation of All Heresies. **They regarded Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah while rejecting his divinity**, and insisted on the necessity of following Jewish law and rites . They revered James the Just and rejected Paul of Tarsus as an apostate from the Law.

Their name suggests that they placed a special value on voluntary poverty.

What Is Adoptionist Christology?

“With regard to the development of all the early Church’s Christology...more happened **in the first 20 years** than in the entire later, centuries long development of dogma.”

- Martin Hengel, New Testament Scholar

“The earliest Christians understood Jesus to have become the Son of God at his **resurrection**. They held that God had exalted Jesus to divine status (**Adoptionist Christology**). By the time of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus became the Son of God at his **baptism** by John. Still later, in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Jesus became the Son of God at his **birth**. Finally, with the Gospel of John, we have Jesus presented as the Son of God **before creation**.”

- Bart Ehrman, How Jesus Became God

Who Were the Theodotians?

Another early adoptionist Gentile group, Theodotians (named after a Roman shoe maker), they maintained that **Jesus was born of a virgin, but that he was completely human**, and not divine, but was later adopted to be the Son of God.

Theodotians asserted that their doctrine was taught by the apostles themselves, and was the standard belief in the church of Rome until the end of the second century CE.

Docetism

First mentioned in 1 John late in the first century CE, Docetists (from the Greek word *dokeo* meaning “to seem”) maintained that rather than being completely human, **Christ was instead completely divine**, so not human by nature. Docetists believed that Christ was not really a man, but only appeared to be. He was completely God.

A Mortal or Spiritual Body?

Luke (24:36-37): “While they were saying these things, Jesus himself stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and afraid, and thought that they were seeing a spirit.” Jesus rebukes them and tells them to feel his body, “Handle me and see, **for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as I have.**” He then eats some boiled fish.

Paul (1 Cor. 15:50): Paul is emphatic that the risen Jesus now has a spiritual body. “...**flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”

Ignatius Opposes Docetism

By the early 2nd Century, Docetism appears to have become a widely held view by some Christian groups. Around 110 CE, Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, Syria, wrote to Christian readers in Tralles (modern Turkey) that they are to “be deaf when someone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ.” For Christ “**was truly born, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted at the time of Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died.**”

- To the Trallians 9

Who Were The Marcionites?

The **best known Docetist** was Marcion of Sinope at Rome (cir 85-160). Marcionites believed Jesus Christ was the savior sent by God, and Paul of Tarsus was his chief apostle, but they rejected the Hebrew Bible and the God of Israel. **Marcionites felt that many of the teachings of Christ are incompatible with the actions of the God of the Old Testament.**

For Marcion, the law was one thing and the gospel another. And since no one could follow the law, it must have been given by the God of the Jews, but salvation came from the God of Jesus. **There were, in fact, two Gods.**

The God of the Jews was a wrathful God and the creator of our imperfect world. He created the law so that he could punish you. The God of Jesus, on the other hand, was a God of love and mercy who sent Jesus into the world to save those who had been condemned by the God of the Jews.

But since Jesus came from the God of love, he could not have been involved in creation or have even actually been born. Instead, he descended from heaven in the appearance of human flesh to fool the creator God.

What Is Gnosticism?

Gnosticism comes from the Greek word for knowledge, gnosis.

Christian Gnostics maintained that salvation came not through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus, but through proper knowledge of the secrets Christ revealed to his followers.

Like Marcion, Gnostics did not think this world was created by the one true God. Instead, one (or more) of many, imperfect, divine beings created our troubled world.

The physical Jesus belongs to this material world, and the inferior God who created it. Nevertheless, one of these divine entities entered the righteous, human Jesus at his baptism and left him as he died on the cross. Those who think that it is the death of Jesus that matters, are the objects of Christ's ridicule.

Early Christian Hetero-Orthodoxies

By the end of the second century CE, adoptionist, docetist and Gnostics views were largely discounted. Most Christians embraced the understanding that Christ was a real human being who was also really divine. He was both man and God, yet not two separate entities, but one. The ongoing question became, if was divine, in what sense was he human?

Justin Martyr

Born in Palestine (cir. 100 CE), Justin was the first true Christian intellectual. A trained philosopher, Justin moved to Rome and founded a Christian philosophical school around 140 CE.

- Christ was a preexistent divine being, the “first begotten of God” before creation of the world.
- He became human for the sake of believers and to destroy demons opposed to God.
- Christ was a preincarnate Angel of the Lord.
- Christ is “numerically distinct from the Father” but at the same time fully God.

Modalism

Thought to be the most popular Christian view by the third century CE, Modalism is perhaps the earliest attempt to explain the mystery of the Trinity.

God resides in three different modes of existence; as the Father, as the Son, and as the Spirit. All three are God, but there is only one God because they are not distinct from one another, but are the same thing in different modes of existence.

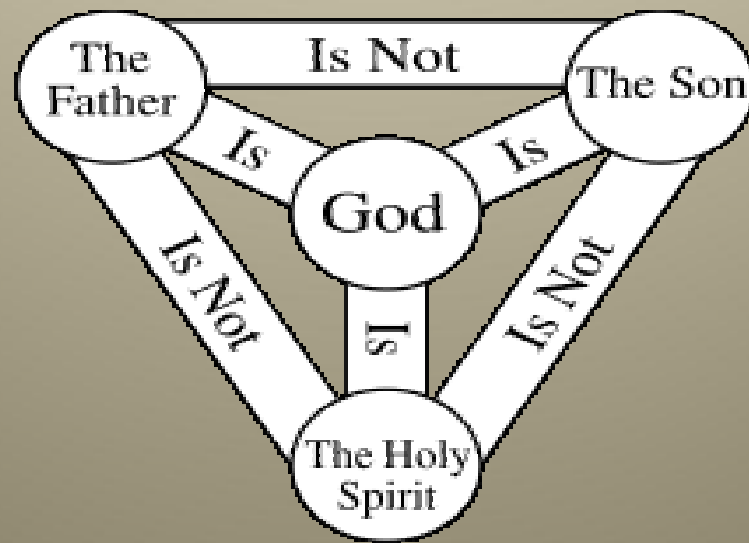
Christ and God could not be separate beings. Therefore, since Christ is God and Christ truly suffered, then God also suffered. He is manifest as Father, Son and Spirit, but there is only one of him.

Separate But One

Critics of Modalism appeared early in the third century CE. Hippolytus, a church leader from Rome and Tertullian of Carthage, North Africa. They believed the Modalists had gone too far.

Scripture portrays Christ as separate from God, “all things are given to me by the Father” (Matt 11:27). Clearly, Hippolytus reasoned, Christ is not giving things to himself. Or as Tertullian sarcastically put it, God the Father “Himself made Himself a son to Himself.”

The Trinity



The Trinity

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: **and these three are one.**" – 1 John 5:7

- The idea of the Trinity came about as a way of solving a vexing theological problem.
- By the early third century, virtually all Christians were monotheists as opposed to there being two Gods as proposed by Marcion.
- For them, God is God. And Jesus is God and had always been God.
- But if God the Father is God, and Christ is God, **how is it that there are not two Gods?**

Divine Economy

Hippolytus and Tertullian each developed the idea of the **divine economy**. There are three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are three distinct beings, but they are completely unified in will and purpose.

Hippolytus states, “The Father is indeed One, but there are Two Persons, because there is also the Son...and then the Holy Spirit...The Father who is above all, and the Son who is through all, and the Holy Spirit who is in all.”

Hippolytus called this three in one God the **triad**.
Tertullian called it the Trinity.

Problems With the Early Trinity

Though approaching the later orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, there were problems with the Devine Economy.

As Tertullian states, “Thus the Father is distinct from the Son, being greater than the Son, inasmuch as He who begets is one, and He is begotten is another.”

The view that the Father is greater than the Son would soon be deemed heretical.

Origen of Alexandria

- Origen born in Alexandria, Egypt (circ. 184-254).
- Viewed now as the greatest Christian theologian before the 4th century debates, he was later condemned for perpetuating heresy.
- His book, *On First Principles* (229 CE) is the first attempt at a systematic theology. In it...
- Christ is God's Wisdom and Word, which existed always with God.
- Since he was always with God, he is God by nature.

Origen of Alexandria

- To explain how Christ became human, Origen said that in the remote past, God created an enormous number of preexistent souls. They were to participate with the Son of God.
- Nearly all the souls failed at their mission. Depending on the failure, some became angels, humans or demons.
- That explains why some humans are born with birth defects and other disadvantages. They are being punished for their greater sins.
- One soul did not fall away.

Origen of Alexandria

- This soul clung with absolute devotion to the Word and Wisdom of God, so close, in fact, that it became “God in all its acts and feeling and thoughts...”
- Thoroughly infused Christ, the Word and Wisdom of God, this soul was used by God to establish contact with the fallen souls that were now human.
- The incarnate version of this soul was Jesus.
- Jesus juggled his humanity and divinity because he “so chose to love righteousness as to cling to it unchangeably and inseparably in accordance with the immensity of its love...”

Arius of Alexandria

Born around 260 CE in Libya, Arius moved to Alexandria. He became a Christian priest in 312. In 318, he (along with other priests) gave the Bishop of Alexandria his opinion on a range of theological issues.

- “The Father alone has neither equal nor like.”
- The Son is “neither equal nor yet consubstantial with him (the Father).”
- “There is a Trinity with glories not alike.”
- “Thus the Son...existed at the paternal will...and he is distinct from everything else.”

The Arian Controversy

“The Arian controversy arose in Alexandria when the newly reinstated presbyter Arius began to spread doctrinal views that were contrary to those of his bishop, St. Alexander of Alexandria. The disputed issues centered on the natures and relationship of God (the Father) and the Son of God (Jesus). Alexander maintained that the Son was divine in just the same sense that the Father is, co-eternal with the Father, else he could not be a true Son. Arius emphasized the supremacy and uniqueness of God the Father, meaning that the Father alone is almighty and infinite, and that therefore the Father's divinity must be greater than the Son's. Arius taught that the Son had a beginning, and that he possessed neither the eternity nor the true divinity of the Father, but was rather made "God" only by the Father's permission and power, and that the Son was rather the very first and the most perfect of God's creatures. The Arians appealed to Scripture, quoting biblical statements such as "the Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). – Wikipedia, 1/15

The Conversion of Constantine



Who Was Constantine?

A successful Roman general, then Emperor, Constantine's conversion to Christianity...has to be understood in a particular way. And that is, I don't think we can understand Constantine as converting to Christianity as an exclusive religion. Clearly he covered his bases. And Constantine was a consummate pragmatist and a consummate politician. He gauged well the upsurge in interest and support Christianity was receiving, and so...exported it in his own rule. But it's clear that after he converted to Christianity he was still paying attention to other deities. But what's important to understand and appreciate about Constantine is that Constantine was a remarkable supporter of Christianity. He legitimized it as a protected religion of the empire. **With Constantine, in effect the kingdom has come. The rule of Caesar now has become legitimized and undergirded by the rule of God.**

– Holland Lee Hendrix, Faculty President at Union Theological Seminary

The Council of Nicea

The Council of Nicea, which took place in 325, was a response to a crisis that developed in the church over the teachings of a presbyter (Arianus), or priest, of the church in Alexandria. And his teachings suggested that Jesus was not fully divine, that Jesus was certainly a supernatural figure of some sort, but was not God in the fullest sense. His opponents...insisted that Jesus was fully divine. The Council of Nicea was called to try to mediate that dispute. It all boils down to one iota of difference. And the debates in the 4th century about the status of Jesus have to do with the Greek word that exemplifies the problem. One party said that Jesus was **homo** usias with the father, that is of the same being or substance as the father. The other party, the Arian party, argued that Jesus was **homoi** usias with the father, inserting a single letter "i" into that word. So the difference between being the same and being similar to was the heart of the debate over Arianism. And the Council of Nicea resolved that the proper teaching was that Jesus was of the same being as the father. – Lillian Claus, Yale Divinity School

The Original Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down, and became incarnate, and became man, and suffered, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and dead, **And in the Holy Spirit.**

But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or created, or is subject to alteration or change

- these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.

CONCLUSION

- The earthly Jesus was viewed as an apocalyptic Jewish prophet preaching the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God. He and his followers may have also seen him as the long promised Messiah.
- The belief that Jesus was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven was the first step on the path to divinity.
- Within 20 years of his death, some Christians saw Jesus as a preexistent divine being who became human temporarily before becoming Lord of the universe.
- Within 80 years of his death, many thought of Jesus as the Word of God made flesh, who was with God at creation through whom God made all things.
- Eventually Christians came to see Jesus as God in every respect, equal to the Father in the Trinity of three persons, but one God.
- With the conversion of Constantine, Jesus' original apocalyptic message was modified to prove that the Kingdom of God, in the form of Rome, had finally arrived on earth.

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