

Lecture 3. New Testament Christology: Part II

This lecture continues the discussion of Christology in the New Testament from the previous lecture. Whereas the previous lecture was more broadly focused, here we will closely examine the letters of Paul and the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke/Acts. Because of limitations of time, we will focus on the letters of Paul and the Synoptic Gospels. We will see that each New Testament author shapes the materials from the tradition that he has received in proclaiming the good news of Jesus and painting a unique portrait of Jesus.

I. The Christology of Paul: The focus of Paul's Christology is the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul writes as an apostle. His Damascus Road experience (see Acts 9; Galatians 1:12-24) was central in shaping his understanding of Jesus. Convinced him of the unity of God's action for the salvation of humanity. Taught Paul about the salvific value of Jesus' death and resurrection. Gave Paul a new vision of history.

Paul learned from the Christian community's tradition about Jesus (1 Corinthians 11-15). One of the most important aspects of Paul's Christology is his idea of Christ as the New Adam -see 1 Corinthians 15:12-28; Romans 5:12-21. Paul employs this Adam-Christ comparison to proclaim the destiny of humanity in light of what God has done in Christ.

II. The Christology of Mark: Mark is the first Gospel to be written (ca. 68-73 CE). Addressed to Christians who had been exposed to the pain and tragedy of human history. Interweaves Christology and discipleship: coming to know who Jesus is and coming to know what it means to follow Jesus go hand in hand.

There is an inherent tension between the exalted status of Jesus and his lowly service, found in each Gospel account of Jesus' public ministry, particularly expressed in Mark. "Mark preserves the greatest amount of lowliness by describing a precrucifixion ministry in which no human being recognizes or acknowledges Jesus' divine Sonship." - Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, 116.

There are two major sections of the Gospel: Jesus as the herald of the kingdom of God. Jesus as the Messiah, whose destiny as the Son of Man - the mystery of the cross - redefines the notion of messiahship

In Mark we find a very stark account of the passion and resurrection of Jesus. "Mark's description of the instant of death is raw and stunning. .. The other

evangelists all soften this moment, giving Jesus in death a greater sense of control. . . But for Mark Jesus dies without such control; he screams and expires. . . No New Testament text more boldly expresses the reality of Jesus' humanity or the manner of his dying." - Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*:(Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1984), 125-6. The confession of the centurion, Mark 15:39. Original ending of the Gospel was probably Mark 16:8.

III. The Christology of Matthew: The Gospel of Matthew incorporates most of Mark, but also has other sources. The Gospel of Matthew is addressed to a community of which Jewish Christians comprise a significant part. We see this relationship expressed in a few ways: The relationship of Jesus to the hopes of Israel. Fulfillment (*plerosai*) quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures throughout the Gospel. The title "Son of David" - cloaking Jesus in the mantle of Moses. Matthew's presentation of Jesus in his public ministry is more exalted than that of Mark - compare Matthew 14:22-33 with Mark 6:45-52

The importance of the title "Son of God" Jesus is the perfectly obedient Son of God - Matthew 11:27 "While the poetic language of this text seems exceptional in the gospel, the underlying theology portraying Jesus as 'Son of God' has been demonstrated by Matthew at every turn. It is this Christology that underwrites the authority of Jesus as messianic teacher and healer and ultimately is the basis for the very existence of the Matthean community." - Donald Senior, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 121.

IV. The Christology of Luke: The Gospel of Luke makes use of Mark as well as a source of Jesus' sayings common both to Luke and Matthew, plus distinctive Lukan sources as well. Luke/Acts is a single work in two volumes, and there is great Christological significance in the speeches of Peter, Stephen, and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles. The author of Luke was probably a Gentile convert to Christianity writing for a mainly Gentile Christian community.

There is a strong motif throughout the Gospel of Luke of promise/fulfillment, with the caveat that the fulfillment is in unexpected ways. See Luke 7:18-35: the "credentials" of Jesus - the Lukan canticles in the Liturgy of the Hours. Luke gives a more exalted presentation of Jesus in his ministry than Mark or Matthew (e.g., see Luke 23:46). Jesus as prophet - see Luke 4:16-30; 24:19 - the end-time, definitive (eschatological) prophet.

Jesus as the Ever-Present One: The Emmaus story (Luke 24) The active presence of Jesus, the Risen One in Acts. "For there is no sense in Luke-Acts of Jesus'

absence from his followers. On the contrary, Luke portrays Jesus actively present to his followers as 'Lord' and 'Christ' whom God has set over the church."
- Jerome H. Neyrey, *Christ Is Community*, 139-40.

Reflection Questions

1. Read Romans 5:12-21. What does Paul's message about sin and grace, and Christ as the New Adam, say to you?
2. Read Mark 15:33-41. Does this stark portrayal of the death of Jesus resonate with you? Why, or why not?
3. Read Matthew 11:25-30. What does Jesus' invitation to come to him and take up his yoke mean to you at this time in your life?
4. Read Luke 4:16-30. What challenges does the prophetic Jesus present to the Church and to the world today? In what ways does he challenge you?