

# Jesus: Myth, Man, or God?

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Jesus asked: “Who do you say  
that I am?”

Mark 8:29

“Jesus’s existence has never been historically established.”

Michael Onfray

*In Defence of Atheism: The Case Against Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2007) p115-116

“I am not a Christian, and I have no interest in promoting a Christian cause or a Christian agenda ... But as a historian, I think evidence matters. And the past matters. And for anyone to whom both evidence and the past matter, a dispassionate consideration of the case makes it quite plain: Jesus did exist.”

Bart Ehrman

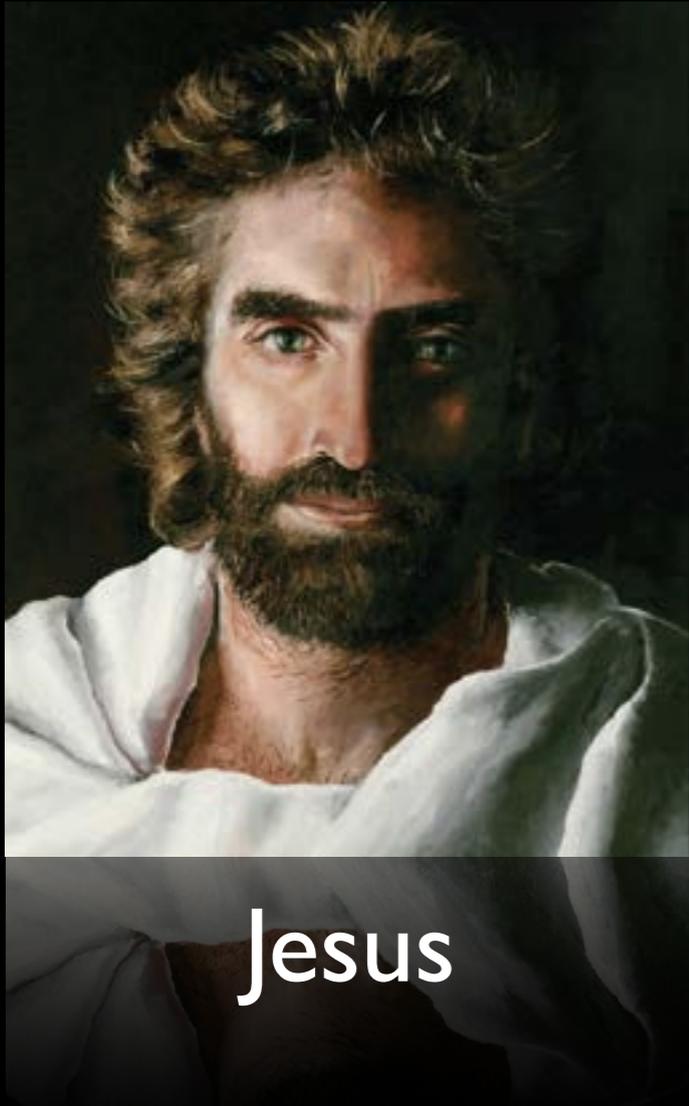
*Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012) p5



# The Mythic Jesus of the Qur'an

# The Jesus of the Qur'an

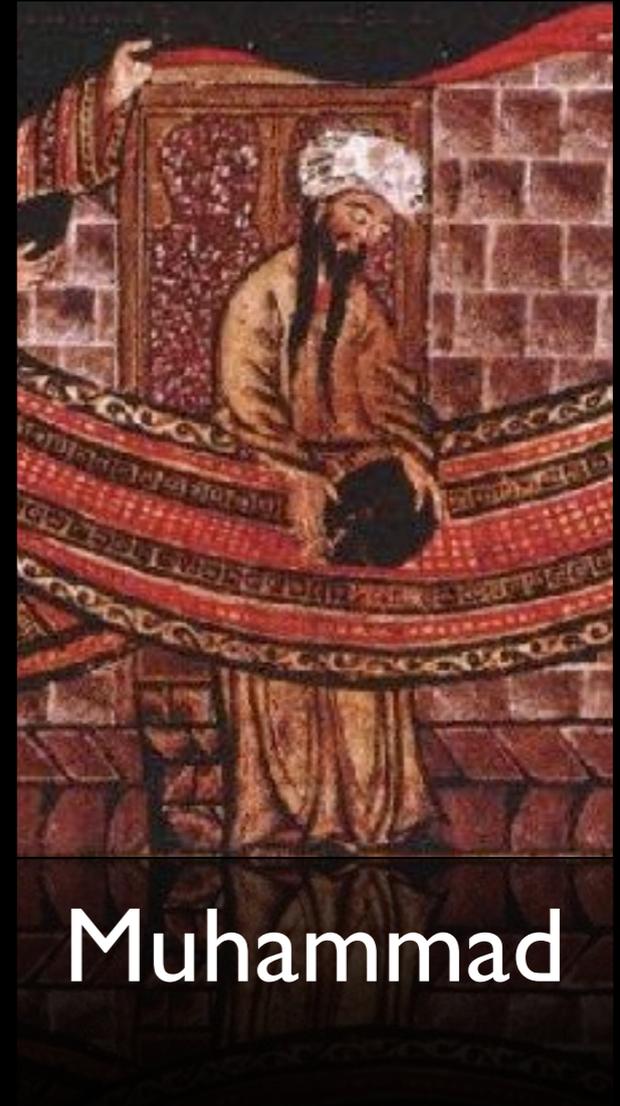
## The Time Gap Problem



Jesus



600 years



Muhammad

# The Jesus of the Qur'an Polemized (not Historical)

“In sum, the Qur'anic Jesus, unlike any other prophet, is embroiled in polemic ...”

“The Qur'anic Jesus is in fact an *argument* addressed to his more wayward followers”

“The Islamic Jesus of the Muslim gospel may be a *fabrication* ... [he is] endowed with attributes which render him *meta-historical*.”

Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature*  
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) p12, 16, 45

# The Jesus of the Qur'an

## Built from Legends and Fables

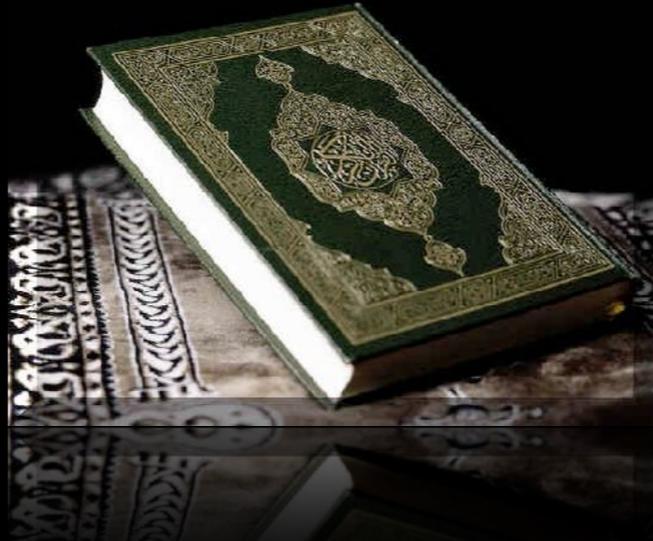
**“This is nothing but tales of the ancients!”**

- The pagan reaction to Muhammad's stories, reported in the Qur'an 46:17 (cf. 6:25; 8:31; 16:24; 23:83; 25:5; 27:68; 68:15; 83:13)



“The Qur’an is not here to teach people history ... the Qur’an is calling people back to God with these stories.”

Shabir Ally



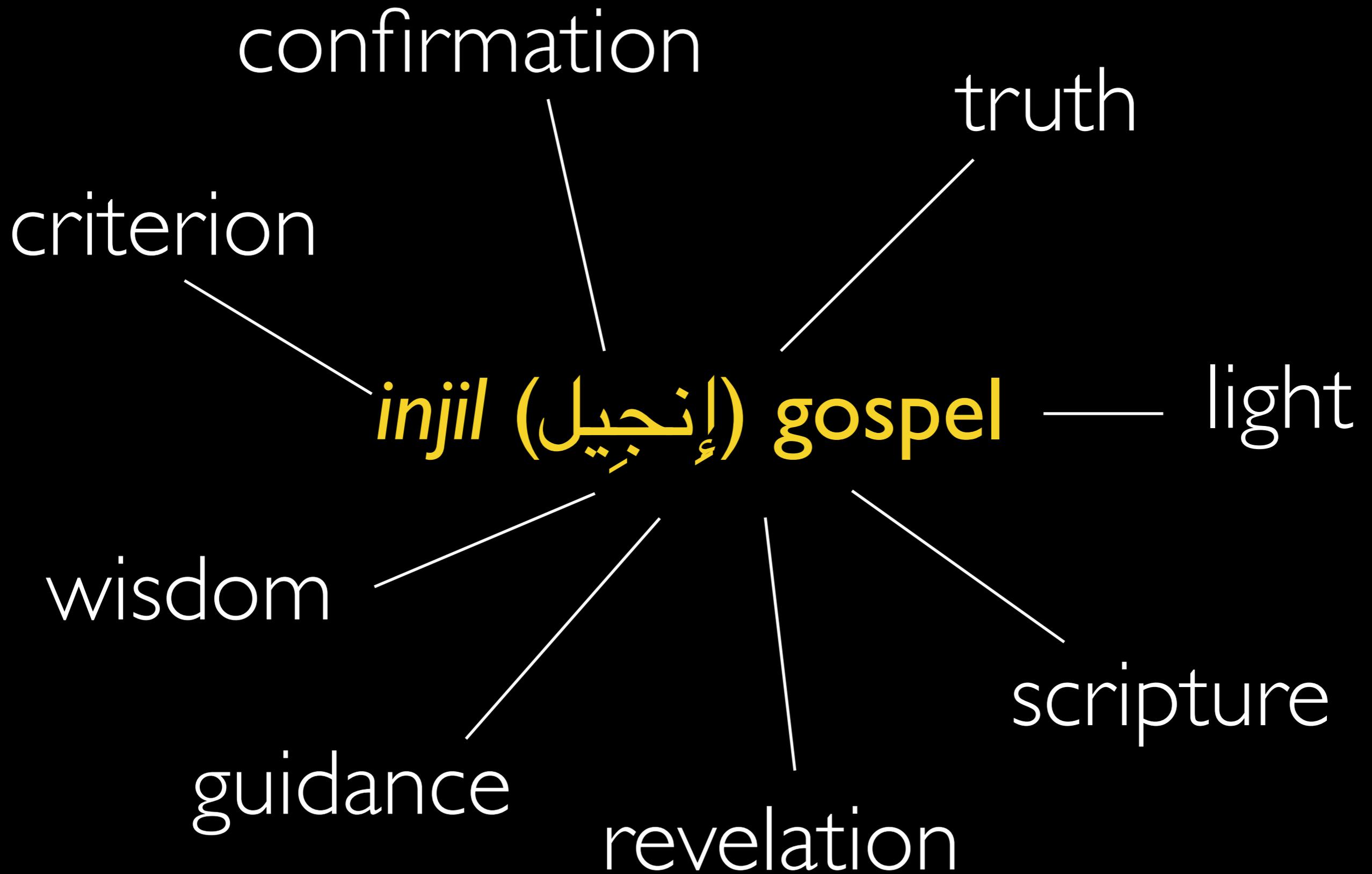
## Titles for Jesus in the Qur'an

A word from (Allah).

Qur'an 3:45

(Allah's) Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him.”

Qur'an 4:171





Pliny the Younger  
61AD - 113AD

[Christians] were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god ...

Pliny, *Letters* 10.96-97 (c. 112AD)



In Second Temple Judaism it was **worship** that demarcated God from non-God

God

Creator of  
all things

Ruler of  
all things

The rest  
of reality

In Jewish monotheism, monolatry, the exclusive worship of the one God ... most clearly signalled the distinction between God and all other reality. God must be worshipped; no other being may be worshipped.

Richard Bauckham

*God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998) p13



Every group of early Christians we know of worshipped Jesus



# The New Testament and the Worship of Jesus

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End”

Revelation 22:13

“This is what the Lord says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.”

Isaiah 44:6

“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne.”

Revelation 5:6

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.””

Revelation 7:10

When God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”

Hebrews 1:6

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:9-11

“By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.”

Isaiah 45:23

“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.

Acts 9:13-14

“Then I called on the name of the Lord:

“Lord, save me!”

Psalms 116:4

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of  
the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”

Matthew 28:19

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one  
of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the  
forgiveness of your sins.

Acts 2:38

“Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.”

James 5:14

Paul said to the evil spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!”.

Acts 16:18

Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”

Acts 3:6

All across the New Testament and early Christianity, we see Christians using Jesus's name in the way that God's name was used in Second Temple Judaism, and we see Jesus receiving the same kind of worship that was uniquely directed to God in the Old Testament.

**God**

Creator of  
all things

Ruler of  
all things

**The rest  
of reality**

## Ruler of All Things

“All things have been committed to me by my Father”

Matthew 11:27 (cf. 28:19; John 3:35; Romans 11:36; 1 Cor 15:28; Eph. 1:10, 22; Phil 3:21; Col 1:16-18; Heb. 1:2; 2:8)

## Creator of All Things

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created.”

Col 1:15-16 (cf. John 1:3ff; Acts 3:15; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-16; Heb. 1:2-3, 10-12; Rev 3:14)

“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.”

Philippians 2:9

“Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.”

I Corinthians 8:6

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

Deuteronomy 6:4

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Deuteronomy 6:4

Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory  
and spoke about him.

John 12:41

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the  
Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne;  
and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Isaiah 6:1

## Mark 1:1-9 / Isaiah 40:3 (Yahweh = Jesus)

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way—a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee.

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

Joel 2:28

“Exalted to the right hand of God, Jesus has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”

Acts 2:33

[T]he step from recognition of Jesus (with the Father) as the source of charismata to some sort of recognition of his share in God's divine lordship would have been a short one—precisely because Judaism made the Spirit so exclusively God's own 'influence'.

Max Turner

'The Spirit of Christ and "Divine" Christology' in Joel B. Green & Max Turner, eds., *Jesus of Nazareth:*

*Lord and Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994) p436

The New Testament  
consistently portrays Jesus as  
doing what God, in the Old  
Testament, said he would do

I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me  
there is no saviour.

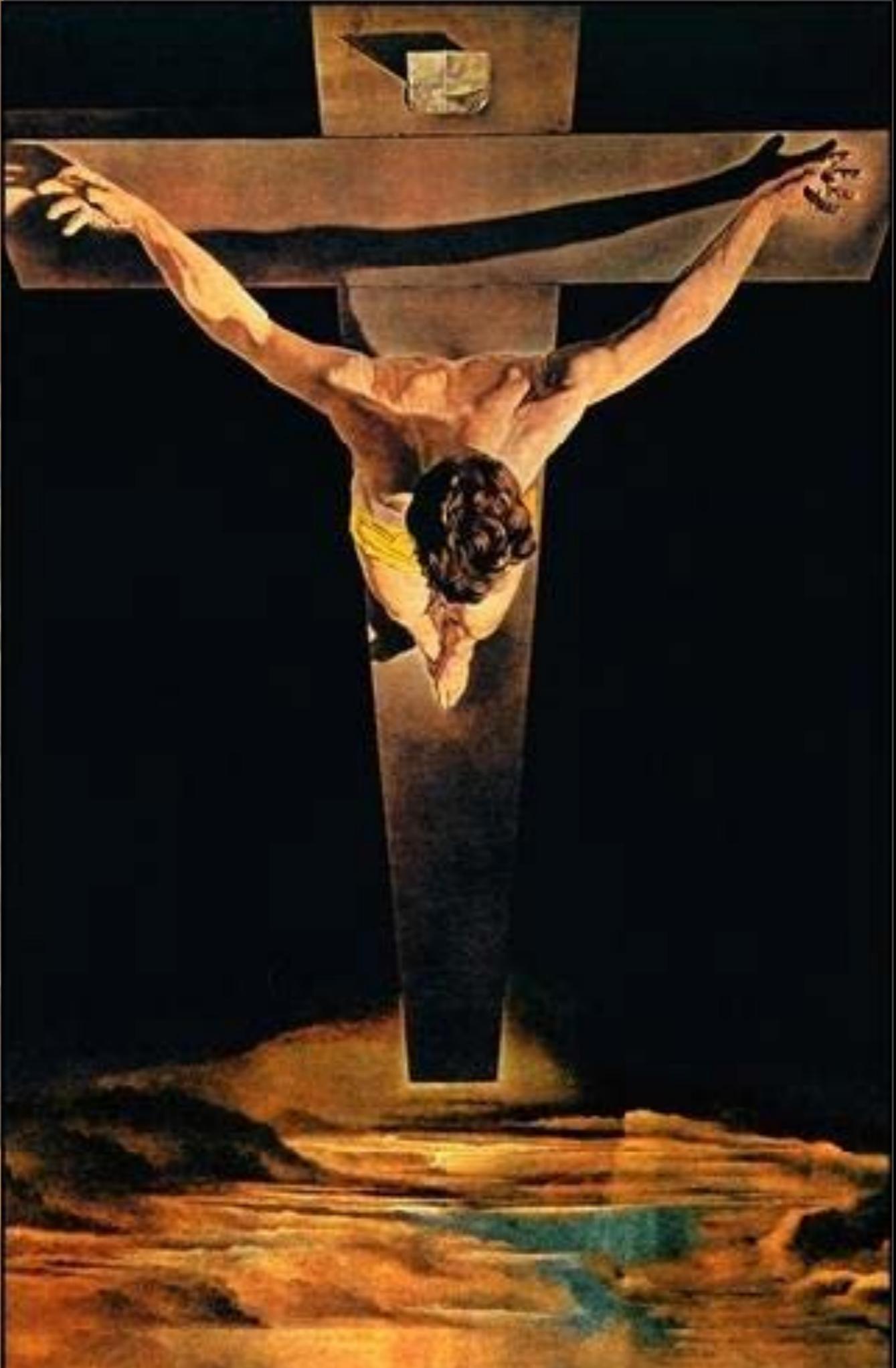
Isaiah 43:11

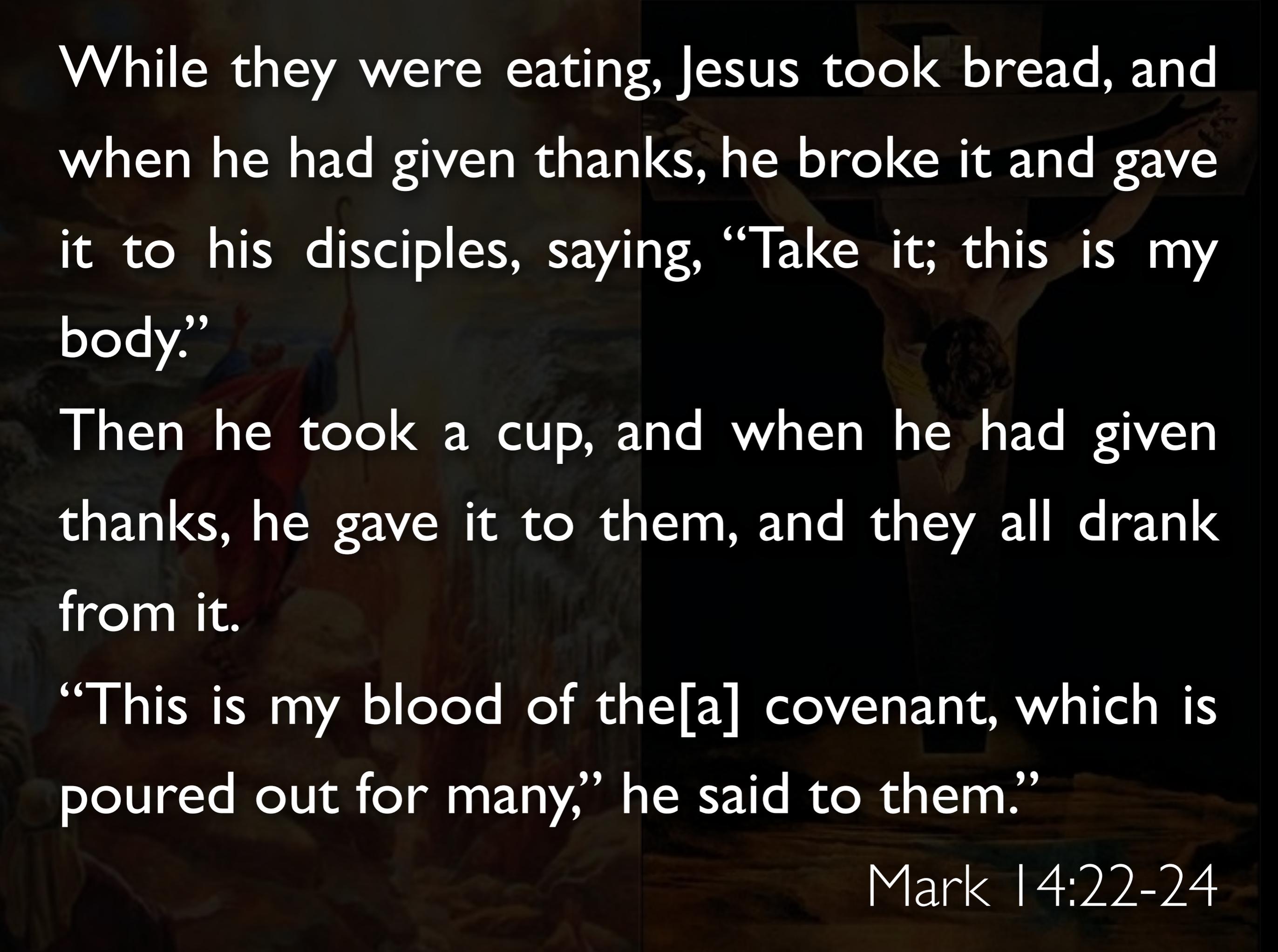
Today your Saviour is born in the city of David. He  
is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:11

As we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in  
the glorious appearing of our great God and  
Savior, Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:13





While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

“This is my blood of the[a] covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.”

Mark 14:22-24

“The time between the death of Jesus and the fully developed Christology which we find in the earliest Christian documents, is so short that the development which takes place within it can only be called amazing.”

Martin Hengel

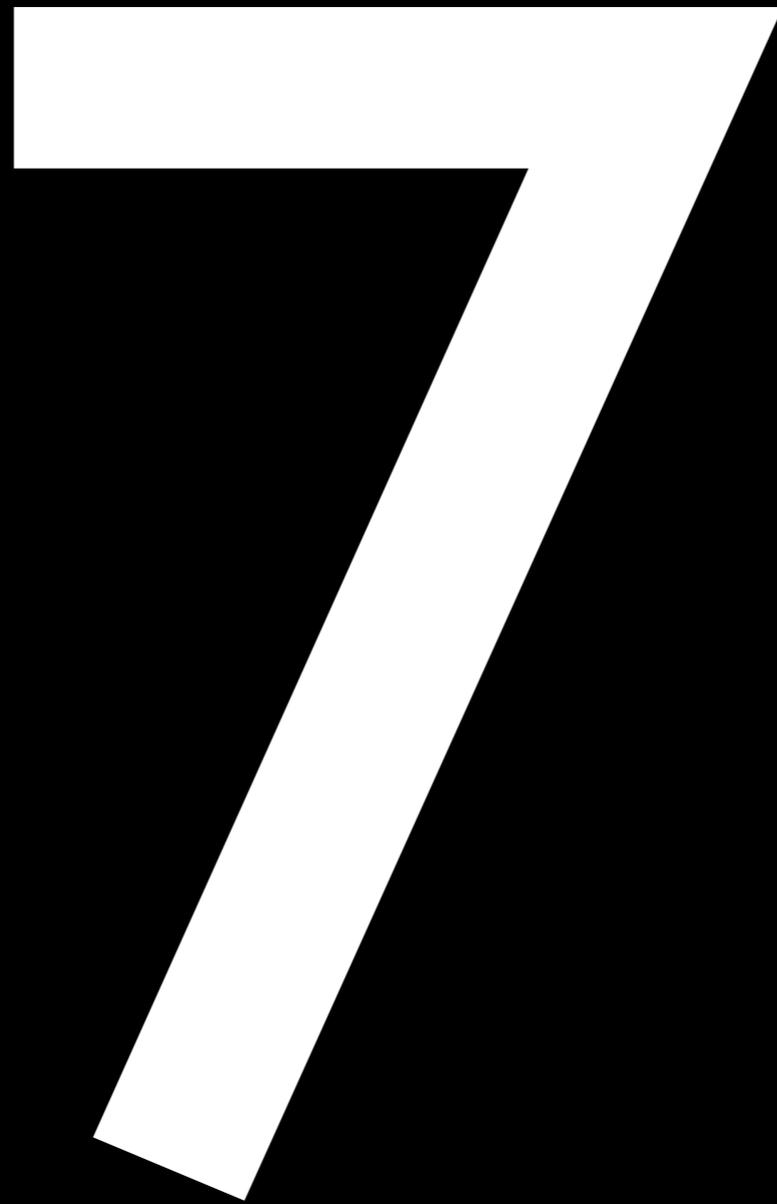
‘Christology and New Testament Chronology’ in *Between Jesus and Paul* (London: SCM, 1983) p31

“[I]f he intended no special role for himself in their religious life, Jesus would have to be seen as spectacularly unsuccessful in communicating his intentions to his followers.”

Larry Hurtado

*Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003) p60

# The Christology of Jesus



lines of evidence

# The Christology of Jesus

## I. Jesus's attitude to the Old Testament

“You have heard that it was said .... [quotes Old Testament] ... but I say to you.”

Matthew 7:21, 27, 31-32, 33, 38-39, 43-44

“Jesus’s attitude to Torah makes me want to ask him: ‘Who do you think you are? God?’”

Jacob Neusner

Cited in N.T.Wright, ‘The Biblical Formation of a Doctrine of Christ’ in Donald Armstrong, ed., *Who Do You Say That I Am? Christology and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999) p63

# The Christology of Jesus

1. Jesus's attitude to the Old Testament

2. Forgiving sin

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”.”

Mark 2:5-7



“Judaism had two great incarnational symbols, Temple and Torah: Jesus seems to have believed it was his vocation to upstage the one and outflank the other.”

N.T.Wright

The Biblical Formation of a Doctrine of Christ' in Donald Armstrong, ed., *Who Do You Say That I Am? Christology and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999) p64

# The Christology of Jesus

1. Jesus's attitude to the Old Testament
2. Forgiving sin

# The Christology of Jesus

1. Jesus's attitude to the Old Testament
2. Forgiving sin
3. Jesus's view of the power of his own name

“For where two or three are assembled in my name, I am there among them.”

Matthew 18:20

“I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

John 14:13

“The idea that he [Jesus] was divine I find on most gospel pages. Any attempt to lessen the self-evaluation of Jesus to something like ‘he thought only that he was a prophet’ would, in my judgement, involve proving the Gospels misunderstood Jesus. No Old Testament prophet acted in such independence of the Mosaic Law; and it is remarkable that one never finds in reference to Jesus a prophetic formula such as, ‘The word of God came to Jesus of Nazareth.’””

Raymond Brown

‘Did Jesus Know He Was God?’, *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15 (1985) p77

# The Christology of Jesus

1. Jesus's attitude to the Old Testament
2. Forgiving sin
3. Jesus's view of the power of his own name
4. His own interpretation of his miracles

Jesus said, “But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Luke 11:20

And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

Exodus 31:18 (cf. 8:19; Deut 9:10)

# The Christology of Jesus

1. Jesus's attitude to the Old Testament
2. Forgiving sin
3. Jesus's view of the power of his own name
4. His own interpretation of his miracles
5. Self-identification as "divine wisdom"

Jesus said, “The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.”

Matthew 12:42

“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

Matthew 11:19

If Jesus made a claim that something greater than Solomon was present in and through his ministry, one must ask what it could be. Surely the most straightforward answer would be that Wisdom had come in person.

Ben Witherington

*The Jesus Quest: The Third Quest for the Jew of Nazareth* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995) p192

# The Christology of Jesus

1. Jesus's attitude to the Old Testament
2. Forgiving sin
3. Jesus's view of the power of his own name
4. His own interpretation of his miracles
5. Self-identification as "divine wisdom"
6. Self-identification as the Son of Man

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power.

Daniel 7:13:-14

## **Jesus Uses ‘Son of Man’ for Himself 80 Times**

Matt 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27–28; 17:9, 12, 22; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 45, 64; Mark 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62; Luke 5:24; 6:5, 22; 7:34; 9:22, 26, 44, 58; 11:30; 12:8, 10, 40; 17:22, 24, 26, 30; 18:8, 31; 19:10; 21:27, 36; 22:22, 48, 69; 24:7; John 1:51; 3:13–14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34; 13:31

Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”

“I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked. “You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”

They all condemned him as worthy of death.

Mark 14:60-64

# The Christology of Jesus

1. Jesus's attitude to the Old Testament
2. Forgiving sin
3. Jesus's view of the power of his own name
4. His own interpretation of his miracles
5. Self-identification as "divine wisdom"
6. Self-identification as the Son of Man
7. Lord of the Sabbath

Jesus said: “So the Son of Man is lord  
even of the Sabbath.

Mark 2:28

Jesus said: “So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.

Mark 2:28

For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

John 5:18



“Who do you say that I am?”

Mark 8:29

“[T]he highest possible Christology, the inclusion of Jesus in the unique divine identity, was central to the faith of the early church even before any of the New Testament writings were written, since it occurs in all of them ... The New Testament writers did not see their Jewish monotheistic heritage as a problem, rather they used its resources extensively in order precisely to include Jesus in the divine identity.”

Richard Bauckham

If you start with a kind of absent landlord kind of God, or the God of deism, [or I would add, the God of Islam], or one of the New Age gods, or even one of the gods of ancient paganism and ask what would happen if such a god were to become human, you would end up with a figure very different from the one in the Gospels. But if you start with the God of Genesis, the God of the Exodus, of Isaiah, of creation and covenant, of the Psalms, and ask what that God might look like, were he to become human, you will find that he might look very like Jesus of Nazareth.

N.T.Wright

The Biblical Formation of a Doctrine of Christ' in Donald Armstrong, ed., *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

*Christology and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999) p66