

Paul's Revelation of Jesus Christ: Christology on The Other Side of The Cross and Resurrection.

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ABSTRACT

As far as Paul's Epistles are concerned Paul is not to be seen as some sort of theological Christopher Columbus when it comes to his contribution to the New Testament. In certain Letters he can write of having received many traditions from those who were before him, including the apostles in Jerusalem, Peter, John, James the Lord's brother, John Mark, who could correct and supplement the knowledge of Jesus which he must have had before his conversion. Again, his supposed lack of reference to "Jesus in the days of his flesh" is challenged and qualified. Paul is presented also as an agent of revelation, standing on the other side of the cross and resurrection. He is therefore able to bring out to the full the eschatological and soteriological significance of Jesus' death. This article will focus upon Paul's Christology as he fills out the traditions of Jesus given in the Four Gospels, his reflection upon him, on the far side of the cross, through the Holy Spirit and with the extra dimension of the new revelations he received, presents him as Messiah, Lord, Son of God, Mediator, Saviour, Last Adam and the believer's unique relationship with him.

KEY WORDS: Occasional Writings, Judaism, Conversion, Revelation, Christology.

INTRODUCTION

Compared with the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of Paul contain little narrative. These are primarily correspondence in which Paul sends greetings, instructions, encouragement, and background information. They are in fact occasional writings, not treatises of systematic theology. Instead, the Letters were written to congregations or individuals in response to specific circumstances or problems and therefore emphasize or apply specific aspects of gospel truth, Christian principles for living, theology and Christology in response to the particular situation churches and individual believers may be facing.

Paul must not to be seen as some sort of Christopher Columbus when it comes to his contribution to the New Testament. In various Letters Paul can write of

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having received many traditions from those who were in Christ before him (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:23-26; 15:3-11). His lack of reference to “Jesus in the days of his flesh” can also be accounted for. Scholars have highlighted three reasons for the unique nature of Paul’s writings:

(a) *The didactic character of the Epistles.*

His Epistles are Epistles not Gospels and do not set out to recount “all that Jesus began to do and to teach.” His particular style lends itself only rarely to illustrative material.

(b) *Paul’s own experience of Jesus was not that of the Jesus of history but that of the exalted Lord.* Paul stands on the other side of the cross and resurrection and is able to bring out to the full the eschatological and soteriological significance of Jesus’ death, resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God. This teaching is not in any sense alien to Jesus’ own self-understanding or that of the Gospel authors. What is inherent in our gospels became emergent in Paul. The seed blossoms to full flower.

(c) *Paul himself was an agent of new revelation – as were other apostles.* Note first Galatians 1:11-17 where Paul insisted that his gospel was not “from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ,” (1:12).² But, as we will affirm, these gospel foundations of the faith and certain Christological truth which were revealed to Paul were to be only the beginning. However, it is important to begin here, in what is considered to be Paul’s first Epistle, since the apostle writes of the man he once was, how God stopped him on the Damascus Road and transformed his world-view and understanding of the person of Jesus Christ.

The phrase in Galatians 1:12 concerning Paul’s reception of “a revelation of Jesus Christ” has been variously discussed. Is it objective or subjective? Silva,³ after a careful discussion of the options, suggests that it should be interpreted as an objective genitive. Elsewhere Paul views God as the source of revelation, when he expresses the subject of ἀποκαλύπτω *apokaluptō* it is always God (1 Cor. 2:10; Gal. 1:16; Phil. 3:15). Longenecker⁴ differs from others in that he sees this statement of the revelation as setting out the *means* rather than the *content* i.e., Jesus Christ is the agent and God the Father is the source. He also makes the point that when it comes to Gentiles living as Christians apart from the regulations of the Jewish law and especially with no requirement of

² All quotations of Scripture are taken from the ESV translation.

³ M. Silva, *Explorations in Exegetical Method: Galatians as a Test Case*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 164-68.

⁴ R.N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41, (Dallas: Word, 1990), 24.

circumcision, “Paul saw this as a ‘mystery’ enigmatically rooted in the prophetic Scriptures but now made known to him by revelation (cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:2-10; Col. 1:26-27), and so uniquely his.” However, it is important to note H.A.W. Mayer’s view in his NT Commentary⁵ in which he makes the point that in Galatians 1:12 Paul is not referring “to the revelations which were imparted to him *generally*, including those of the later period, for here mention is made only of a revelation by which he *received and learned* the gospel.” Paul in Galatians 1 is focusing upon what was only the beginning of all the theological and Christological truth that would be revealed to him throughout his many Epistles.

Yet it is helpful to begin here in Galatians 1 order to understand the phenomenal transformation which took place in the life of Saul of Tarsus. There were three chapters in that life highlighted here in Galatians.⁶

(a) *In the Jewish Religion.* Paul writes about the dark history of his former life before he met the Lord, (Galatians 1:13-14). He was a fanatic in persecuting (ἐδιώκων *ediōkon* and ἐπόρθουν *eporthoun* are both imperfects, “persecuting” and “seeking to destroy,” suggesting a period of persistent persecution and the use in v13 of καθ’ ὑπερβολήν *kath’ hyperbolēn*, literally “beyond exceeding measure” signals an “intensity” in persecution which was undiminished). Witherington⁷ explains that the above adverbial phrase, “indicates the level to which the persecution reached. Paul went to extremes, the persecutions being not merely extensive (in and beyond Jerusalem) but also intensive.” We also know that when he had ravaged the Christian community in Jerusalem, he set out for Damascus. So, he “tried to destroy” ESV, but did not succeed⁸ the church he now knew to be “the church of God” (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1, 13; 22:4). It was God’s church and he would come to see that he had actually dared to set himself against God!

Paul also was extremely zealous – a “zealot,” not for political ends but for the traditions of his fathers, advancing in Judaism, outstripping his young friends as he progressed as a Pharisee in the “strictest party” of the Jewish religion. Fung⁹ makes the point that to a Jew, a crucified Messiah was in itself a decisive refutation of any claim to messiahship – as in effect, Paul himself points out in

⁵ H.A.W. Mayer, in <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/mayer/galatians/1.htm>

⁶ For a fuller treatment of these verses, see my commentary, H. Moore, *Glory in the Cross, A Commentary on Galatians*, (Pontypool, Torfaen: Faithbuilders Ltd., 2019), 58-71.

⁷ B. Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 100.

⁸ See also Silva, *Explorations in Exegetical Method: Galatians as a Test Case*, 71.

⁹ R.Y. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*. NICNT, (Michigan, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 59.

1 Cor. 1:17-24. A crucified Christ was an insult to every Jew and “impelled him (Paul) to give himself wholeheartedly to what he considered the unmistakable duty and sacred duty of uprooting the pernicious sect of Jesus’ followers.”

The verb προκόπτω *prokoptō* in its imperfect form (προέκοπτον *proekopton*), “I was progressing” will express the continuing religious and moral progress of Paul’s advancement in Judaism which was unparalleled among his contemporaries. The same word is used of Jesus’ development as he grew “in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,” (Luke 2:52). Regarding the reference to the “traditions of my fathers” Longenecker¹⁰ suggests that Paul will be referring to (1) the teachings and practices developed in the Pharisaic schools of Second Temple Judaism, later codified in the Mishnah, Palestinian and Babylonian Gemaras, Midrashim, and various individual halakic and haggadic collections of rabbinic lore, plus (2) the more popular interpretations in the synagogues of the time, represented in the extant Targumim. Stott¹¹ affirms, “No conditioned reflex or other psychological device could convert a man in that state. Only God could reach him – and God did!”

(b) *On the Damascus Road.* Before this it was “I,” “I” (v13-14). Now it is “he” - the subject of the two participles is no doubt “God” (v15-16), *ho theos* – recognised by this addition in \aleph A, D and *et al.* In every stage of Paul’s experience, the initiative and grace of God are mentioned.

Paul was the object of God’s special electing purpose. He was once a Pharisee, a separatist, now he discovers that he himself was destined, set apart before he was born, like Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4f.), to be God’s chosen instrument, called by God’s grace - a calling by grace to preach the gospel of grace.

Paul testifies that God “was pleased to reveal his Son to me” (1:16). We can compare this statement with v12 above. Here there was a revelation made ἐν ἐμοί *en emoi* literally, “in him.” We do know that there was a great revelation made *to him* on the Damascus road – he saw the risen Christ (Acts 9:5, 27; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8). But this moment also involved an inner illumination – something like 2 Cor. 4:6, or the removal of the veil from his heart, 2 Cor. 3:14. Paul also through this encounter on the way to Damascus received a new understanding of Jesus Christ, his person, also the reason for his death and of

¹⁰ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 30. Fung sees the “tradition of the fathers” as “Pharisaic traditions and more particularly those enshrined in the oral law transmitted and expounded in Pharisaic schools, which comprised the 613 prescriptions (248 positive commands and 365 prohibitions) of rabbinic exegesis,” *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 57.

¹¹ J.R.W. Stott, *The One Way: The Message of Galatians* BST (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 32.

course his gracious calling to be the apostle to the Gentiles. For Bruce,¹² Jesus Christ is revealed, but the gospel and Jesus Christ are inseparable. The ESV, as we quoted above, uses the simple dative in the text i.e., “to me,” but then includes “in me” as the footnote. Are there not two aspects to the one revelation? Fung¹³ also insists that:

...the phrase should not however, be taken to suggest a merely inward revelation without a corresponding external object, for there is little doubt that the preceding phrase (“to reveal his Son”) refers to Paul’s vision of the risen Christ (also attested in 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8) on the road to Damascus ... the inward illumination and the physical vision were alike part of God’s revelation to him.

Paul’s testimony was that the revelation by God was of “his Son.” Note the other references to Jesus as “Son of God,” 2:20; 4:4, 6. This should not be understood as merely a reference to the incarnation for it is used in a resurrection context i.e., on the Damascus Road. As we will see shortly, it is Christological, Sonship in the ontological sense (see also Rom. 1:3f; 1 Cor. 1:9; 15:20-28; 1 Thess. 1:10). Fung¹⁴ affirms, “Paul is claiming that he received insight into the unique nature of Jesus’ sonship.” We recall how Luke tells us that “immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues saying, ‘He is the Son of God,’” (Acts 9:20). Stendhal¹⁵ is an example of scholars who consider that what happened on the Damascus was only a call, like other prophetic calls in the OT (e.g., Jer. 1:5-6; Isa. 6; Ezek. 1). It is true that the experience involved a call, but, in the light of Paul’s former views concerning Christians and Jesus Christ noted above, it was first of all primarily a conversion.

Damascus was all-important as to how it influenced Paul, his whole world-view, his Christology and theology. One is reminded of how Jeremias¹⁶ many years ago affirmed, “There is only one key to Pauline theology. It is called Damascus.” O’Brien¹⁷ also sees much more happening on the Damascus Road than just “a call.” He maintains:

To describe the Damascus Road experience as *simply* Paul’s “call” to the Gentiles does not account for the revelation of Christ and his gospel in which

¹² F.F Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1982), 89.

¹³ Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 64.

¹⁴ Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 65.

¹⁵ K. Stendal, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 7-23.

¹⁶ J. Jeremias, “The Key to Pauline Theology,” *Ex T.* Oct. 1964, 27-30.

¹⁷ T. O’Brien, “Was Paul Converted?” in D. A. Carson, T O’Brien, and M. A. Seifrid, *The Paradoxes of Paul*, Vol. 2 (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2004), 390. See also Galatians 1:6 where Paul describes the “conversion” of the Gentiles as their “calling” by God.

there was a radical change in Paul's thinking about Jesus as the Messiah and the Son, about the Torah, the messianic salvation, and not least Israel's and the Gentiles' place within the divine plan. In the Damascus encounter Paul underwent a significant "paradigm shift" in his life and thought; his own self consciousness was that of having undergone a conversion.

Again, Witherington¹⁸ can say:

Paul's gospel of grace is bound up with Paul's experience of grace and is grounded in the content of God's revelation of his son in Paul, which Paul then worked out the implications of for his beliefs about God, messiah, law, salvation, who God's people are and a host of other subjects.

Many of the above were briefly worked out in this Epistle. Paul's whole gospel is centered in Christ – in fact in Christ crucified, (3:1; 6:14). His symbolic universe has been radically affected, we could say "turned upside down."¹⁹ So his conversion and call coincided in time, and the sightless days at Damascus gave him opportunity to reflect on his experience; it actually confirmed to him how mistaken he had been. To sum up, the Damascus Road brought to Paul truly a revelation of Jesus Christ, i.e., a whole new Christology. The purpose of his call was "to preach him among the Gentiles." Note the present tense (compared to the aorists, "set apart" and "called") affirms Paul's continual preaching of the Christ he had come to know. Note that in what follows the area of his ministry is now identified as a Gentile area (Galatians 1:17-21; 2:2, 8).

(c) *On the Missionary Trail.* Paul reveals that first there were some things he did NOT do, (v17-24). He did not confer with flesh and blood but remained independent of all human authority. He did not go up to Jerusalem. The mention of apostles "before me" implies that he is also now as much an apostle as they were (the words *πρὸ ἐμοῦ*/*pro emou* are temporal, referring to time, not status). But then there were things which he DID do. Instead of "going up," he "goes away." He went to Arabia – see Acts 9:19, 23, and note the "some days" he was with the disciples in Damascus, followed by the "many days," implying a leaving from and a returning again to Damascus after his time away from the city.²⁰

¹⁸ Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia*, 115.

¹⁹ Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia*, 115.

²⁰ Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia*, 116 suggests that the word "immediately" v16 has an emphatic position and seems to go with what follows it. "Paul is denying any immediate consulting with humans including any immediate going up to Jerusalem. And by contrast an immediate departure to Arabia."

Arabia is generally understood as the Nabataean kingdom east of the Jordan valley established in the 2nd century BC. Bruce²¹ points out that there were many Gentiles there, settled and Bedouin and no doubt Paul preached to them. His presence there if only for “a contemplative retreat” – which must have certainly a big part of what occurred – would not explain why in 2 Cor. 11:32 he attracted the hostile attention of the governor. There was a time around 37CE when Caligula was emperor that Aretas was Ethnarch in control of the city of Damascus and because of Paul’s preaching in Arabia he went after Paul so that he had to escape in a basket. Therefore, he had returned from Arabia with his commission and message confirmed to the very city he had formally set out for, intent upon the destruction of the church. Now again he must secretly leave. Acts 9:23-25.

In v18 ἐπειτα *epeita* “then,” (the first of 3 successive occurrences of the word) as Paul emphasises the chronological or temporal sequence of events with no gaps between, 1:18, 21; 2:1, informing his readers that after three years²² (from the time of his first Damascus road experience) he goes up (reference to the city’s geographical location) to Jerusalem “to visit Cephas.”²³ While some scholars will stress that among other things this must have been for a history lesson about Jesus and that at the time he would receive earlier traditions, which has been acknowledged, as McDonald²⁴ also explains, not much could be learned in such a short time. “Indeed, he came knowing for himself the gospel as God’s ordained apostle. It was not to be instructed that he came, but to inform.” The visit was short – fifteen days – then he went off (with nothing intervening) to Cilicia (see Acts 9:30) – to Tarsus – through Syria and therefore via Damascus. So, he is far north and nowhere near Jerusalem. That is the argument Paul is stressing in Galatians. He is making clear that for ministry among them he had not received nor did he require any authorization or commission from the leaders of the Jerusalem church (see v16 “I did not immediately consult with anyone...,” literally “flesh and blood” – perhaps denoting human frailty over against God). In the context of the argument therefore, no directions, advice as to ministry opportunities, or interpretation of

²¹ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 96. See also Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 69.

²² Witherington suggests that we should understand this time reference to be an example of “inclusive reckoning” i.e., “in the third year,” not “after three full years.”

²³ Paul often called him Cephas “rock” or “stone” (Gal. 2:9, 11, 14; 1 Cor. 1:12; 15:5). Only in Gal. 2:7-8 is he “Peter.” Note also that there are some scholars who propose that the word “visit” would be better read as “to get acquainted with.” Fung, who is attracted to this view, also points out that however we translate, no doubt Paul would learn from Peter the early traditions about Jesus. Also, from James who is mentioned here – see the references in 1 Cor. 15:1-7 where both are highlighted in a passage about what Paul had “received.” “The theory of Paul’s lack of interest in the historical Jesus lacks a substantial basis,” Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 74.

²⁴ McDonald, *Freedom in Faith*, 34.

his experience on the Damascus Road was given.²⁵ *In his total isolation from the Jerusalem church leaders he demonstrates that his message was not from man but from God.* The “three years” can intentionally be contrasted with the “fifteen days.” There is no dependence here or major influence from Peter – nor James “the Lord’s brother” (Paul only “saw” James, but did not consult with him). James had been resistant to or at least in doubt about Jesus during his earthly ministry (Mk. 3:21, 31-35; John 7:3-5), but was transformed by a resurrection appearance of Jesus to him (1 Cor. 15:7) and was among the members of Jesus’ family²⁶ in the Jerusalem church (Acts 1:14). A brother of Jesus now also in the full spiritual sense, he had risen to leadership among them (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18-19; Gal. 2:1-10). But the point is that Paul did not get his gospel from either of them.

So, Paul was “still unknown” (v22), the grammatical sense is the continuance in that state,²⁷ to the churches in Judea. The Galatian readers (and the Judaizers, who were troubling them) needed to accept the divine origin of his message. His commission and gospel are based upon a revelation from God rooted in a direct encounter with Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road who called him and there was at that time no contact with the leaders in Jerusalem. His message, the revelation of Christ to him, a gospel of grace, of salvation without works apart from law was from God and was the only gospel! In v20, Paul had reaffirmed these facts by an oath “before God” that his statements are totally trustworthy, “I do not lie.” In the Galatian context, in this way he responds to the claims of the Judaizers that the apostle would have received his authority and learned his gospel from the Jerusalem leaders during his first visit there.

So, Paul is not in any area (Syria and Cilicia) where he would be under the supervision of the leaders in Jerusalem, nor were they aware of his movements. Paul uses the second “then” although this time, he does not mention the time period involved. Witherington²⁸ makes the point that “Antioch was the capital of the Roman Province of Syria-Cilicia at the time and the next most prominent city therein was Tarsus, and so we should certainly compare this text to what is said in Acts 9.30, 11.25-26.” The adverb μόνον *monon* “only” makes clear that there was only one exception to their lack of knowledge (v22) concerning Paul. They “kept hearing” (the grammatical sense of the Greek

²⁵ Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 70.

²⁶ There is no reason to regard Jesus’ “brothers” as really first cousins, children of Alphaeus and Mary of Cleopas (Jerome AD 347-420) or sons of Joseph by a previous marriage (Protoevangelium of James AD 145, see 9.2). But with Tertullian (AD 160-220) in *Adv. Marc.* and Helvidius (before AD 383) there is an insistence that one does not need to uphold the perpetual virginity of the virgin Mary subsequent to Jesus’ birth.

²⁷ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 41.

²⁸ Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia*, 124.

phrase, which can imply a considerable period of time) that the former persecutor (*νῦν nun* “now” emphasises the transformation) was preaching “the faith” he had formally “tried” to destroy. The term “faith” here with the article is a reference to the gospel or the content of the apostolic message, rather than the act of trusting.

Therefore, he was “not known” but “well known.” The Judean Christians (the churches of Judea that are said to be “in Christ”) “glorified God” for this early mission ministry of Paul reminding us of Isa. 49:3 LXX, God’s statement regarding glory brought to him by his Servant. After “trying” to destroy but of course unable to succeed – as many others have tried since – he ended up never “tiring” of preaching this “law-free” gospel of grace. As Witherington²⁹ has pointed out, “The choice of words here is to be explained by the fact that Paul thinks the content of his proclamation is being challenged in Galatia. This document is intended to argue for that content and against the alternative offered by the agitators.” We should note that this content of Paul’s gospel is focussed upon the revelation of Jesus Christ and his cross (Galatians 6:14) and the way of blessing is not “by works of the law” but by faith – a word used by Paul 22 times in this short letter to the Galatians.

Beginning with the revelation of Christ and his conversion on the Damascus Road, his time in the city, the meeting with Ananias, his “some days” with the disciples at Damascus, the reflective time in Arabia, (Acts 9:3-25) all led to a total transformation of Paul’s understanding of who Jesus was and his world-view. As Mayer reminded us, there were other “revelations” of Christ to come (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1). Note the references already given above in Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:2-10; Col. 1:26-27, all part of the full understanding on the other side of the cross, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. Paul will continue to bring out the soteriological significance of Jesus’ death, our eschatological hope and a full Christology – the revelation of Jesus Christ. The rest of this article will summarise Paul’s Christology, in light of his own experience on the Damascus Road, his reflection upon the risen, exalted Lord and the insights and revelations graciously given to him.

CHRISTOS OR MESSIAH IN PAUL

From the day of his conversion Paul had no doubt that Jesus was the Messiah, (Acts 9:22). Yet we can say that Christ’s Messiahship is not prominent in his Letters. Also, the term *Christos* has become almost exclusively a proper name. Taylor³⁰ believes there is only one place where *Christos* is used as a title, (Rom.

²⁹ Witherington, 111, *Grace in Galatia*, 126.

³⁰ V. Taylor, *The Names of Jesus* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1953), 21.

9:5). Some scholars think a titular meaning is still possible in Rom. 10:6; I Cor. 10:4; 15:22; 2 Cor. 4:4, 5, 10. So the simple form “Jesus the Messiah” has altogether disappeared while “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus” or “Lord Jesus Christ” are frequently used. Cullmann³¹ considers Paul’s occasional practice of putting Christ before Jesus shows how aware he is that the word was originally a title and not a proper name.

Ladd³² suggests that the disappearance of the titular use of Christos and its transformation into a proper name occurred probably in the Hellenistic church. Since Paul was writing to Gentile audiences in the main the titular sense would have conveyed little. Terms like kingdom (which is also little used by Paul) and Christos were open to gross misinterpretation, (Acts 17:3, 7).

Although there are few references to Jesus as Messiah, the kingdom of God and the Messiahship of Jesus are fundamental doctrines in Paul’s thought. The concepts are present without the terms. Where Paul speaks of the fulfilment of scripture or the promises given to the prophets regarding Jesus, (Rom. 1:2; I Cor. 15:3f), his reign and his victory over his enemies, (I Cor. 15:25, 26), his establishment of his kingdom, (2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:5), his role as Judge, (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 2:16) he is speaking of Messianic functions.

JESUS AS LORD

Kurios is the predominant description of Jesus in Paul and in Gentile Christianity. “Jesus” on its own is found only 8 times in Paul, while the title “the Lord” is found 144 times. In addition, on 95 other occasions it is connected with “Jesus Christ” (either Lord Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus the Lord). It was a title which was more meaningful to Gentiles with their “gods many and lords many,” (I Cor. 8:5).

(1) The use of Kurios in the Ancient World

(a) It was a flexible title and could be used of a person with possessions, e.g., it is used of the master of the house or the owner of the vineyard (Matt. 20:8; 24:45; Luke 13:8; Acts 16:16; Gal. 4:1; Eph. 6:5).

(b) It could mean “sir,” being found as a polite term to convey respect without reverence. In Gen. 18:12 it is used of a husband, “my lord being old also”; of a prophet, (1 Kings 18:7; Matt. 21:30), by a son to a father; or to a stranger (John

³¹ O. Cullmann, *The Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM. Press, 1959), 134.

³² G.E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974), 409.

12:21; 20:15). There appears to be instances where it is used in this polite sense of Jesus in the gospels, (John 4:11, 15, 19, 49; 5:7).

(c) It appears as a courtly sense when addressing kings, governors or rulers of the Roman Empire, (Acts 5:26; Rev. 17:14; Matt. 27:63 (of Pilate)); of an angel, (Acts 10:4; Rom. 7:14).

(d) It is used with a religious meaning. The word is used to describe the gods of the mystery religions, (I Cor. 8:5). Also, more importantly, it is used in the LXX 8,000 times to translate the Hebrew for the God of the Old Testament. In addition, in the New Testament where Old Testament quotations with the name of God occur, *Kurios* is used.

(2) Use of the Title in Paul and Primitive Christian Thought

In Paul (and Gentile Christianity) it can be claimed that the title “*Ho Kurios*” (the Lord) as applied to Jesus had acquired an absolute sense implying sovereignty and deity. The question is when or where was the title in this sense first applied to Jesus?

W. Bousset³³ in the past and more recently R. Bultmann³⁴ maintained *kurios* was only used of Jesus when the gospel moved out into a Hellenistic environment. References in the Gospels to its use during the life of the Lord were either anachronistic, editorial or only polite usage. However, there is evidence that the title was used earlier. In 1 Cor. 16:22, “Our Lord, Come!” points to its use in the worship of the Aramaic-speaking Church. See also Acts 2:36; 7:59; and Acts 10:36 for use in Jewish Church circles by Peter and Stephen. Indeed, as we acknowledged, while many occurrences of *kurios* as applied to Jesus in the Synoptics and John are only titles of respect in the vocative, there are some which imply more. Again, there are instances where *Ho kurios* is employed by the evangelists because of the established usage at the time of writing (i.e., a deliberate anachronism – “He whom we now know to be the Lord”). Luke is particularly fond of describing Jesus in this way (Lk. 7:13, 19; 10:1, 39, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15; 17:5-6; 18:6; 19:8; 21:61; 24:34).

There are also two other passages where Jesus uses the term of himself. See Matt. 7:21, “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom

³³ W. Bousset, *Kurios Christos* FRLANT 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913, ET 1970). He asserts that the worship of Jesus as Lord developed on “Hellenistic soil” in places as Antioch and Damascus. See Bousset’s foreword, 11–23.

³⁴ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1952-55), 1. See his discussion of Lord and Son of God, 121-133.

of heaven.” While the passage does not define what Jesus meant by Lord it certainly implies more than a courtesy title. Again, another passage, Matt. 22:41f., Mk. 12:36f., Lk. 20:42-44, “The Lord said unto my Lord.” Also, Jesus uses this title to designate his dignity in Mk. 2:28; 11:3; 12:37. The passages above with the quotation from Psa. 110:1, “The Lord said to my Lord,” where the Messiah is being called *kurios* by the Psalmist is “very important.” Taylor³⁵ thinks that this is probably one of the factors that led the early Christians to think of Jesus as *kurios*. It became a normal way of describing Jesus after the resurrection i.e., in its exalted Christological sense. This is only what we would then expect of Paul.

(3) *What the Title meant for Paul*

In light of the earlier former use the title *will* express his sovereignty and deity. Some scholars point out how Paul was strongly influenced by Old Testament thought and therefore, the LXX use of *kurios* should be regarded as the key to an understanding of the term when applied to Jesus i.e., it is an appellative for God. Ladd³⁶ maintains, “It is the ascription to Jesus of the function of deity.” As the Lord, the exalted Christ exercises the prerogatives of God (e.g., salvation, Rom. 10:13 and Joel 2:33), note that The Day of the Lord (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2) has become The Day of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 1:14), or The Day of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8) and The Day of Christ (Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16).

Paul proclaims Jesus as the only true Lord in contrast to the imaginary lords of the Gentile powers (1 Cor. 8:5-6). Ladd³⁷ claims that it was, “A title which made sense to both Jews and Gentiles although the overtones for each group would be different.” But the common denominator is the notion of divine sovereignty. We can affirm, “Jesus is Lord!” In practical terms. What is the significance of recognising that Jesus is not only your Saviour but your Lord? Jeff Clarke³⁸ has set out the contrasts:

- (i) “Jesus is Saviour” emphasises sins forgiven. “Jesus is Lord” emphasises a reorientation in life, which includes sins forgiven. I’m no longer the king of my domain, he is. This reorientation changes everything.
- (ii) “Jesus is Saviour” impacts me. “Jesus is Lord” impacts me and everyone around me.

³⁵ V. Taylor, *The Names of Jesus* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1953), 42.

³⁶ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 416.

³⁷ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 299.

³⁸ www.jeffclarke.com/the-difference-in-calling-jesus-savior-and-lord-and-its-implications-for-discipleship/ Accessed August 2021.

(iii) “Jesus is Saviour” is often deeply personalistic and privatised. “Jesus is Lord” retains the personal dynamic, but spreads out to impact everything and everyone around me. It is mission-oriented; we are sent ones who seek to reflect Jesus to others.

(iv) “Jesus is Saviour” affects only the so-called spiritual aspects in life. “Jesus is Lord” affects all of life; it is holistic and all-encompassing. Everything is affected by it; every day and in every way. It isn’t limited to Sunday, or a mid-week program, or more generally to the religious side of life. It lies at the centre of life and thereby orientates, shapes and informs everything else.

In Acts 10:14 Peter does not fully grasp the implications of what he was saying. He is responding to the Lord’s directions in evangelism through the vision of the great sheet with “all kinds of animals” which he saw coming down from heaven. When advised to kill and eat he exclaims, “By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” But we cannot say, “By no means, Lord.” Only “Lord.”

SON OF GOD

As far as the Son of God is concerned, Paul does not attempt to demonstrate the divine sonship of Jesus; he assumes it. In all he uses the title seventeen times; four times “the Son of God,” on two occasions, “the Son,” eleven times “his Son” (including twice “his own Son”). In calling Jesus by this title Paul is doing no new thing. As with the title “Lord,” his Christian predecessors had done it. If we ask why they should have done so, no good reason can be given except that it was known that Jesus had so spoken of himself (Matt. 11:27; Mk. 12:6; 13:32; 14:62). As for Rom. 1:3-4, some have seen here a primitive “adoptionist” Christology i.e., in the flesh Jesus was a son of David: he “became” the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead. For example, E. Schweizer,³⁹ in *Lordship and Discipleship* proposes, “The exaltation [is] the first beginnings of Jesus sonship to God.” But an alternative explanation is possible i.e., the resurrection simply *declared* or *designated* what was already an eternal reality. Note Jesus was God’s Son when he sent him to do by his death what the law could not do (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4). Often when speaking of God, Paul goes on to speak of his Son (Rom. 1:9; 8:29; Eph. 4:13; Gal. 4:6; Col. 1:13). There is an essential and unique relationship between God the Father and the pre-existent Son.

The Son of God, Jesus Christ was the subject of Paul's preaching to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:19). He is the object of faith (Gal. 2:20) and knowledge (Ephesians 4:13), and all Christians are called into fellowship with Him (1 Cor.

³⁹ E. Schweizer, *Lordship and Discipleship* Studies in Biblical Theology (London: SCM Press, 1960), 59.

1:9). The pre-existent Son was God's agent of redemption (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3). By his sacrifice and by faith we are translated by God from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son of his love (Col. 1:13). Note that "the kingdom of God" in the Synoptics and the teaching of Jesus has become "the kingdom of the Son," another indication of his divine status. Col. 1:15ff explains all that the Son is. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of (i.e., preeminent over) all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together ... in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." He is the one for whom we wait, (1 Thess. 1:10).

1 Cor. 15:28 suggests a kind of final subordination of the Son to the Father. Paul writes of the moment "all things are subjected" to the Son. At that time "the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all." Here Paul is not discussing the nature of God or the Son being some kind of lesser being than the Father. This is not a subordination to do with deity or nature, but a demonstration of the perfect harmony of all things in God. The Son has never been at variance with the Father's will in the outworking of his mission.

There are clear assertions of Christ's deity in Paul.

(i) We noted that Jesus is often called Lord, the very word used of God in the LXX. It is also significant that in Trinitarian contexts Lord is often used (1 Cor. 8:6; 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14). The implication is that the persons are equal but distinct.

(ii) Verses which refer to God in the Old Testament are applied to Christ in the New such as Joel 2:32 in Acts 2:21 and Rom. 10:13. Note that Phil. 2:9-11 has an allusion to Isa. 45:23. For the bride and bridegroom image, see Hos. 2:20 and Eph. 5:25. Other New Testament writers take a similar course.

(iii) There are clear affirmations of his deity in Phil. 2:5-11. Here Paul uses *morphe* of Jesus being in the "form" of God. It has been understood as having close links with *ousia* (essence). Lightfoot⁴⁰ explained, "the possession of the *morphe* involves participation in the *ousia* also." The suggestion is that being in the form of God means possessing deity. Guthrie⁴¹ also maintains, "When the *morphe* phrase is interpreted by means of the 'equality with God' statement which follows the conclusion is inescapable that *morphe* means existence equal to that of God." The term seems to point to the outward form corresponding to

⁴⁰ G.B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878), 111.

⁴¹ D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 346.

underlying reality. As Motyer⁴² explained, “one who possessed inwardly and displayed outwardly the very nature of God himself.”

(iv) Divine works are ascribed to Christ. These include judgment (1 Cor. 4:4-5; 5:4f.; 2 Thess. 1:7-10), creation (Col. 1:16) and salvation (Psa. 130:8).

(v) Prayer is addressed to Christ. Very often prayer is associated with the name of the Lord (1 Cor. 1:2; 16:22; 2 Cor. 12:8), as are benedictions (Rom. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:14) and doxologies (Rom. 9:5). In these references, Paul does not identify God with Christ. He distinguishes their persons. Yet there may be two references where Paul calls Jesus Christ God. These are all the more remarkable given his strong monotheism. First, Rom. 9:5. Note the alternative translations.

KJV. “Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

NIV. “From them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, for ever praised. Amen.”

ESV. “according to the flesh is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

But note RSV. “to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen.”

In the first three, we have a description of Christ. The final one is a doxology to God, although the RSV margin has the alternative rendering i.e., “*Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever.*” The difference comes about by a change of punctuation. Since ancient Greek manuscripts did not have punctuation marks, we need to seek to resolve the problem on other grounds. Several points favour the KJV/NIV/ESV rendering.

Paul's normal practice in a doxology is that it must be seen as relating to the one immediately referred to (cf. Rom. 1:25). In this case, it is Christ. Again, a concluding doxology would usually have the word “blessed” placed at the beginning and not at the end. Also, there seems to be an antithesis here between flesh and God. It is common in the New Testament to contrast God and flesh. Finally, the Greek participle *hōn* must be considered as superfluous if the reference is to God, but not if it refers to the antecedent, Christ.

The second text to be examined is Titus 2:13. Once again different translations are possible.

⁴² J.A Motyer, *The Message of Philipians*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 109.

It could be argued that KJV misses the deity. “The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” The reading could suggest two persons.

Modern Versions generally have “Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Grammatical evidence favours the second, for if there had been any intention of differentiating “God” and “Jesus” a second article would have been used.

THE ONE AND ONLY MEDIATOR

In 1 Tim. 2:5-6 Paul affirms, “There is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” We have here Paul’s monotheism – one God. This is an abbreviation of the *Shema* from Deut. 6:4, the Jewish affirmation of faith which reflects a belief in the living God over against the many gods of the Gentiles. Paul has used it elsewhere, for example, Gal. 3:20; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5-6 and in Rom. 3:29-30 where he writes of a God who includes Gentiles as well as Jews in the one way of justification through faith.

But that justification, that acceptance of those alienated from God required something, or rather someone. “There is one mediator.” The word here is *mesitēs*, the individual known from the legal or commercial world who as a negotiator can help two parties to make a transaction, to settle a dispute or effect a reconciliation. Job himself longed for this, “There is no arbiter (“mediator” NKJV) between us, who might lay his hand on us both” (Job 9:33). In theological use, the word will involve Jesus by his giving of himself for others providing the means of reconciliation between sinners and a holy God. Note that Paul affirms that Jesus is the *one and only* mediator for all men.

Stott⁴³ outlines three positions about other religions and the relationship of Jesus Christ to them.

(i) “exclusivism.” Jesus is the only saviour and salvation is only by faith in him. It involves inclusivism in one sense i.e., a universal offer of salvation – but in Christ.

(ii) “inclusivism.” Jesus Christ is the Saviour, but he saves different people in different ways, especially through their religion.

(ii) “pluralism.” This involves accepting the independent saving validity of the different religions, denying uniqueness to Christ.

⁴³ J. R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus* (Leicester, IVP, 1996), 68-69.

In Paul's day, while there were many religions, "many gods" and "many lords," the apostle affirmed that there was only ONE GOD and, exclusively, there was only ONE MEDIATOR who could reconcile sinners to him. Paul writes of "the man Christ Jesus." This "mediation" was accomplished by Christ in his humanity and through his human death for us. In the Greek text there is no article here, only "*anthrōpos* Christ Jesus," which points more to his nature and attributes as human. His birth as a man or his complete participation in humanity was necessary if his "human" death was to be representative for us, in solidarity with us and substitutionary, "*as a ransom*." A ransom was the price paid for the release of slaves. Here we have the *antilutron* – the exchange price which was the ground through which we have been delivered. Morris⁴⁴ explains that the word here means "substitute-ransom," highlighting the use of the preposition *anti*. The verse says he gave "himself," *heauton*, a pronoun that emphasises that his death was a voluntary self-offering. Also, this death was for all, both Jew and Gentile – effectively of course bringing salvation to all who believe (1 Tim. 4:10). Note that the use of "all" points to the universal emphasis of the whole passage (1 Tim. 2:1-7).

JESUS AS LAST ADAM AND SECOND MAN FROM HEAVEN

The Adam theme is by no means central to Pauline Christology, but it does play a significant role. There are two main passages, Rom. 5:12-21 and 1 Cor. 15:21-23 and v45-49. Jesus is likened to Adam and also contrasted with Adam.

In the Romans 5 passage Paul sees in Adam, the head and inclusive representative of the human race, all that pertains to him and of course in Christ, the Christian community, all that pertains to him. Jesus was the only one able to undo the effects of Adam's sin and become the inaugurator of a new humanity. Christ's obedience and righteousness is contrasted with Adam's disobedience and trespass. Jesus, as Adam was also a representative man. Through death and resurrection, he has restored humanity, a new kind of humanity. Note Romans 5:15-18 where Paul first uses *Alla*, "but..." to make the point that Adam was a type of Christ, but there are some significant differences, (5:15). Just as what Adam did had effects on a great number, so also it is with Christ. Adam, by his sin, greatly wronged his descendants, bringing them all down into condemnation; but Christ gave his people an abundant gift. His gift is said to overflow i.e., he not only reversed the effects of Adam's sin, but brought an abundance of positive blessings – "the free gift by the grace of that man Jesus Christ abounded for many." Dunn⁴⁵ makes the point that, "the implication is clearly that God's response to Adam's trespass sought not merely to make up

⁴⁴ L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 51.

⁴⁵ J.D.G Dunn, *Romans*, 2 Vols. (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1988), 280.

the ground which had been lost but also to bring to completion the destiny of which Adam had fallen short.” The grace we experience is embodied in him and in his one act of righteousness, i.e., the one act of obedience, the cross, (5:18). The *dōrea* “gift” will include the Holy Spirit, (Romans 5:5, justification, or imputed righteousness, (5:16-17), eternal life, (5:18, 21) – a fullness of blessing, an overflow,⁴⁶ which our federal head has secured for us.

In 1 Cor. 15:22 the contrasting results Paul sets out show vividly the supremacy of Christ to Adam. Adam is a man of death (Rom. 5:12), but Christ, the Last Adam, is the man of power to give life to a redeemed race (see also 1 Cor. 15:45, where he is “a life-giving spirit”). Again, in 1 Cor. 15:47, Adam “a man of dust,” liable to decay and dissolution, alluding to Genesis 2:7, is contrasted with Christ “the man from heaven” – the nearest Paul comes to the phrase “son of man.” Note that there is a textual variant here: some MSS read *kurios*, “Lord.”

The Last Adam, heaven in his source; he is part of that higher, imperishable order, as Norman Hillyer⁴⁷ explains, “originally as God become man, and eschatologically (i.e., now) in the glory of his resurrection.” In 1 Cor. 15:48, like Adam, we were “of the dust,” we all shared the corruption and mortality that is characteristic of the human race. Christians, because of their new life in Christ are already “of heaven” and to them, Paul holds out the certainty in his teaching on the future resurrection of that ultimate bodily likeness to Christ; that “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor. 15:19).

WHAT ABOUT SAVIOUR?

Note that as far as the title Saviour is concerned, it is only found in Paul in Eph. 5:23; Phil. 3:20 and Titus 2:13. Is there a reason for the infrequent use of this title for Christ? It was commonly applied in Paul's day to earthly rulers. Most consider that this is why it was rarely used by the Lord Jesus.

Towner⁴⁸ points out that, for example, when the victories of Augustus which brought the *pax Romana* to the Imperial Provinces were being honoured, he was referred to as the “Saviour” who “when he appeared” exceeded all the

⁴⁶ A word Paul can use expressing the fullness of God's grace in his blessings upon us, (5:17; 2 Cor. 9:8) and what should be our response to him, (1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Cor. 8:2, 7; Phil. 1:9; Col. 2:7 in our service, our joy, sacrificial giving, love and thanksgiving).

⁴⁷ N. Hillyer, “1 Corinthians” in *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, eds D Guthrie and J. A. Motyer (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), 1073.

⁴⁸ See P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 418, who quotes from the translation of N. Lewis and M. Reinhold, eds., *Roman Civilisation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955).

anticipated “good tidings” (called *euangelion* or gospel) concerning him. Another use in connection with Augustus is the following from the Priene Calendar Inscription,⁴⁹ 9 BCE:

Whereas the Providence which has guided our whole existence and which has shown such care and liberality, has brought our life to the peak of perfection in giving to us Augustus Caesar, whom it filled with virtue for the welfare of mankind, and who, being sent to us and to our descendants as a saviour, has put an end to war and has set all things in order.

So, the emperor was repeatedly called “the saviour of the world” and “the saviour of the inhabited earth.” Where Paul writes of the *euangelion* as he does at times, he not only wished to communicate in a language that would be understood in the culture but to make clear *the superiority* of the “epiphany” of Christ and the real blessings of peace with God, security and hope which it brought. This, therefore, appears to be the reason for the restrained use of the title. But the whole of the Epistles of Paul “bleed” with references to the work of the Saviour, the work of the cross and the precious blood.

IN CHRIST

To conclude this whole treatment of Paul’s teaching on Christology we need to consider Paul’s often employment of the concept “in Christ.” It is claimed that the heart of Paul’s religion is union with Christ. The terms “in Christ,” “in him,” “in the Lord” occur over one hundred and sixty-four times in Paul. This concept appears to be the creation of Paul. It was a new technical term to explain his relationship with Christ and the blessings he had received. On the Damascus Road Paul heard Jesus say “Why are you persecuting me?” – when Paul was persecuting the church. Reflecting on this, Paul came to understand that when Christ was summoning and welcoming him to be part of the church, he was also calling him into vital unity with himself. Note that when the Gospels speak of the disciples’ fellowship with Jesus they used “with” not “in” (e.g., Matt. 28:20). Yet the way was prepared in the Gospels – see Matt. 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I among them.” Matt. 25:40 reads, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” John 15:1f. says, “Abide in me and I in you.”

⁴⁹ The Priene calendar inscription of 9 BCE is an inscription in stone recovered at Priene, an ancient Greek city in Western Turkey. It uses the term “gospel” with reference to Augustus Caesar, announcing his kingdom, heralding peace and salvation for his people. It also was concerned with a Roman decree to start a new calendar system based on the year of Augustus Caesar’s birth.

This term has Christological implications. It is worth reminding ourselves that no such words have ever been used, or indeed could ever be used of any of the sons of men. Christ cannot be just a figure in history, but a living personal presence whose nature is the very nature of God himself. It would appear that to be in Christ is parallel to being in the Spirit. Paul thinks of the Christian as living in a *pneuma* element.

But what does the concept “in Christ” mean? Some see here the influence of mysticism in the apostle. In the ancient world “spirit” could be thought of as a fine invisible matter which could interpenetrate all visible forces of nature. Christ would therefore be seen as the all-pervasive Spirit, a kind of spiritual atmosphere in which the believer lives. With this view, Paul does not lose his personality but Christ does.

Schweitzer⁵⁰ in his 1931 book, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, suggested that for Paul believers are redeemed by entering already, through the union with Christ, through a mystical dying and rising again with him into a supernatural state of existence. We recall the teaching of Romans 6:5, “If we have been united with him in a death like his we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” The idea is developed further in Eph. 2:6. Made alive in Christ, God has “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Neil Earle⁵¹ explains that Paul is speaking here metaphorically, and sums up his understanding of this great truth:

First of all, Christians are “as good as there,” concerning their salvation. Christians who are “in Christ,” raised in him, they can be said to be already in some sense living with him in the heavenly places. We already begin to participate in aspects of that new-creation life in our present union with him.

Secondly, being “in Christ” means Christians live in two realms—the physical world of everyday reality and the “unseen world” of spiritual reality. This has implications for the way we view this world. We are to live balanced lives. We bear primary allegiance to the kingdom of God and its values on the one hand but, on the other, are not to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good. It’s a tightrope, and every Christian needs help from God to walk it securely.

Thirdly, being “in Christ” means we are trophies of God’s grace. Being “in Christ” means that when God looks at us he does not see our sins. He sees Christ.

⁵⁰ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 380.

⁵¹ Neil Earle, “Resurrection and Ascension: What it means to be in Christ,” <https://www.gcs.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=4257>. Accessed August 2021.

There is no more encouraging teaching than that. This is reemphasised in Col. 3:3: “For you died and your life is hidden with God in Christ.”

For Earle, if God has done all this for us, has in some senses already inducted us into the heavenly realms, then that means we are to live as ambassadors for Christ. God has displayed his resurrection power to us to be a daily demonstration of God’s goodness, to show by our good works that he exists and that he cares.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.” The prophets looked forward to the day when God would do a new thing. This would be an eschatological event when he would create new heavens and a new earth. This new age has dawned in Christ. It has broken into the old age. In Christ, men need no longer be confined to the old age but are partakers of the blessings of the new age. So, to be “in Christ” is to receive these spiritual blessing ahead of the coming of the new age; it means to be in the sphere of salvation – including seated in heavenly places.

THE HUMAN JESUS IN THE PAULINE CORPUS

To conclude, how much did Paul know about the historical Jesus? It has been often said in the past that Paul knew next to nothing about him. In the debate about the historical Jesus and the exalted Christ it has been suggested that Paul possessed practically no biographical material about Jesus and was not greatly interested in his life, words and deeds. Ladd⁵² explains how Bultmann and others saw this as a supporting factor in the assertion that the historical Jesus had been quite lost from sight behind the transforming power of Christian belief or Easter faith which changed a Jewish prophet into an incarnate deity. However, as we noted, Paul did receive earlier traditions and the reference to resurrection witnesses demonstrates that Paul is conscious of the historical basis of the Christian faith. His lack of reference to the Jesus of history had been exaggerated and often misunderstood.

It can be maintained that one could glean enough from Paul’s Letters to write a brief life of Christ. Paul knew Jesus was an Israelite of Abraham’s seed (Gal. 3:16, Rom. 9:5), descended from David (Rom. 1:3), born of a woman (Gal. 4:4) with his earthly lot, that of a poor man (2 Cor. 8:9). He had a brother called James (I Cor. 9:5, Gal. 1:19) and 12 apostles (I Cor. 15:4), two of them called Cephas and John (Gal. 2:9). Before the Jews killed him (I Thess. 2:15), in fact on the night he was betrayed (I Cor. 11:23), he instituted the Lord’s Supper (I

⁵² Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 412.

Cor. 11:23ff). On the third day he was raised and appeared to many witnesses (I Cor. 15:3ff).

Paul does not give us a full portrait of the character or personality of Jesus (neither do the gospel writers) but he does give us some valuable insights. He mentions the meekness and gentleness of Christ (2 Cor 10:1), his grace (2 Cor. 8:9), his humility (Phil. 2:5f), steadfastness (2 Thess. 3:5), obedience (Rom. 5:19, Phil. 2:8) and on his righteousness (Rom. 5:18) and sinlessness (2 Cor. 5:21) he built his doctrine of the believer's justification. See also Rom. 8:3 where Paul's Christology is so precise. To say Jesus came in "the likeness of flesh" would be docetic. To say he came in sinful flesh would make him a sinner. So, Paul says he came in real flesh like ours, but with one exception i.e., he did not share our sinfulness.

In comparing Paul's teaching to that of the Lord's many scholars have found many unmistakable echoes.

On non-resistance to evil (Rom. 12:17, I Thess. 5:15 cf. Matt. 5:3a).

On returning blessing for cursing (Rom. 12:14 cf. Matt. 5:44).

On love as the law's fulfilment (Rom. 13:8f cf. Mark 12:28-34).

On the need to restore an erring brother (Gal. 6:1 cf. Matt. 18:15ff).

The duty of rendering to all their dues (Rom. 13:7 cf. Mark 12:13-14).

On judging (Rom. 14:4-10 cf. Matt. 7:1).

Causing others to stumble (Rom. 14:13 cf. Matt. 18:6ff).

On freedom from worry (Phil. 4:6 cf. Matt. 6:25).

Being at once simple and wise (Rom. 16:19 cf. Matt. 10:16).

On mountain-moving faith (I Cor. 13:2 cf. Matt. 17:20).

What a revelation of Christ was given to the apostle Paul! Initially on the Damascus Road, when he is brought to realise that the Jesus whose followers he was fiercely persecuting was the true Messiah and Son of God. There is his further contemplation in Damascus and Arabia, also likely at Lystra, at his stoning, when he was caught up into the third heaven was given "revelations of the Lord," (Acts 14:19-20; 2 Cor. 12:1-4); and finally, in the further revelations to which he refers at various times throughout his ministry. Paul the persecutor became Paul the one "preaching the faith he once tried to destroy," (Gal. 1:23). He proclaimed Jesus on the other side of the cross, resurrection and exaltation as Messiah, Lord, Son of God, the one and only Mediator, the Last Adam and Second Man, Saviour, whose people are in Him and who presents Jesus as truly human and divine.

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