

Jesus and the God of Judaism in the New Testament

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General theory

Jesus at first seen as prophet

The Christian Church gradually saw more and more in Him

Climaxed in Fourth Century Creedal formulas

Based on a developmental approach (evolutionary)

Reads NT evidence in light of theory of history

New Testament reality

Earliest Christology was the highest Christology

Grounded in Jewish concepts of God

The Church Fathers did not develop a higher Christology

They contextualized NT into Greek philosophical context

Not wrong, but different

Arose in context of controversy (Arianism and Modalism)

Source of much misunderstanding with Judaism and Islam

Scriptures more concerned with *who* God is than *what* God is

What is all about nature, essence, attributes (Greeks)

Who is about relationships

Exod 34:6-7

Jewish monotheism

Distinguished God from all other realities

Line of distinction

Everything below the line is not God

Angels, prophets, possessions, achievements, job, religious institutions

The distinctive teaching of Judaism

Deut 6:4

Exod 20:2-6 (Deut 5:6-10)

Isa 44:6-8

How to identify who God is (recite the first four)

Sole ruler over everything

Dan 4:34-35

Additions to Esther 13:9-11:

"O Lord, Lord, King who rulest over all things,
for the universe is in thy power
and there is no one who can oppose thee
if it is thy will to save Israel.

For thou hast made heaven and earth
and every wonderful thing under heaven,
And thou art Lord of all,
and there is no one who can resist thee,
who art the Lord.

Hos 13:4

Sole creator of everything

Isa 40:26, 28; 44:24; 45:12 (Isa 40-45)

Neh 9:6

Bearer of unique name ("Yahweh")

Exod 6:3

Deut 6:4

Deut 4:35 (Deut 4:39)

Only One worthy of worship

Exod 20:4-6

Exod 34:14

Jesus and Jewish monotheism

The NT includes Jesus in the One God of Judaism (this step taken early)

Divine Rule

Creation

Name

Worship

Heb 1:3-14

“Name above all names” (3-4)

Angels ordered to worship him (5-6)

Throne above all others (7-8)

Creator (10-12)

Divine Rule

Eph 1:21-22

Heb 1:7-8

Identified with God not angels

Creation

1 Cor 8:4-6 cf. Deut 6:4

Verse 6 reproduces entire Shema

Not adding a “Lord” to God

Jesus Christ = the One Lord of the Shema

Rom 11:36

“From, to and through Him” = “God”

Name

Isa 45:22-24 cf. Phil 2:9-11

We learn two things

Jesus identified with Yahweh

“Yahweh” itself is not the critical thing

Worship

Phil 2:9-11

Rev 4-5

Crescendo

United on throne (Rev 3:21)

Other NT evidence

Book of Revelation

God = Alpha and Omega (1:8)

Jesus = First and Last (1:17) (Isa 44:6; 48:12)

God = Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End (21:6)

Jesus = Alpha and Omega, First and Last, Beginning and End (22:13)

John 12:37-43

Ties together Isa 53:1 and 6:9-10

Ties the humanness of the cross with the divinity of the throne

The "I AM" texts of John (see Appendix 2)

John 1:1-5; 20:28

Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT promise that

Yahweh will be universally acknowledged on earth

Payoff:

Trinity means God is Love by nature, not just in creation

In relationship with Jesus we are in relationship with God

When Jesus speaks He speaks for God

The voice of Jesus is God's voice

Through Jesus we can know what God is like

John 14:9

2 Cor 5:18-19

Steps to Christ, 10-12 (see Appendix 1)

Appendix 1

Steps to Christ, 10-12

“God has bound our hearts to Him by unnumbered tokens in heaven and in earth. Through the things of nature, and the deepest and tenderest earthly ties that human hearts can know, He has sought to reveal Himself to us. Yet these but imperfectly represent His love. Though all these evidences have been given, ***the enemy of good blinded the minds of men, so that they looked upon God with fear***; they thought of Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. ***It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men. . . .***”

“Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, which refused to receive Him, the way, the truth, and the life. They had rejected Him, the Saviour, but He regarded them with pitying tenderness. His life was one of self-denial and thoughtful care for others. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While He ever bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with the tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save.

“Such is the character of Christ as revealed in His life. ***This is the character of God.*** It is from the Father's heart that the streams of divine compassion, manifest in Christ, flow out to the children of men. Jesus, the tender, pitying Saviour, was God "manifest in the flesh." 1 Timothy 3:16.”

Appendix 2: The “I AM” Texts of John

“I AM” in the Greek of John is *ego eimi*

John has three types of “I AM” statements

- 1) Self ID-- human level (6:20; 4:26)
- 2) Self ID-- divine level (with predicates)
- 3) Absolute use

OT Background

- 1) Reveals Yahweh’s nature (Ex 3:14; 6:2,3)
- 2) Reveals His uniqueness (Isa 43:10-11; 46:9-10)
- 3) Expresses future salvation in terms such as living water, bread (manna), wine in abundance, fruitful vineyards, glory of God, Good Shepherd

Predicate Use in John (7 times)

- Bread (6)
- Light (8, 9)
- Door (10)
- Good Shepherd (10)
- Resurrection and life (11)
- Way, truth and life (14)
- Vine (15)

These become expressions of what Jesus has to offer.

Eschatological salvation is present now in Jesus.

Absolute Use in John

- 1) 13:19 cf. Isa 46:9-10

His knowledge of the future is evidence of His divine authority.

- 2) 8:24,28 cf. Isa 43:10-11

His “exaltation” is proof of His divine authority. Belief becomes essential to salvation.

- 3) 8:58 cf. Exod 3:14

Pre-existence as divine being

Summary:

Two evidences of Who He Is: prophecy and the cross

Two truths expressed:

- pre-existent divinity
- belief essential to salvation