

The Jesus Legends

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2 Corinthians 11:3 - 4

V4 - "if one comes and preaches another Jesus" (εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει)

(ἄλλον) - someone else besides; an additional, similar, yet distinct

(κηρύσσει) - announce, publicly proclaim, make known, tell everywhere

Paul sounded the alarm bells of the possibility of men coming to introduce 'another Jesus' into the church. This Jesus, when preached, would appear so similar to the Jesus of biblical history, yet be vastly different. And these 'men' will make every attempt to proclaim this 'other' Jesus to everyone, everywhere....

Notice how Paul refers to 'another' Jesus, NOT another Christ (refers to his office) - they would introduce. Paul warned that these men were going to alter Jesus and his personality (personhood), not his function.

And so it happened, as Paul forewarned.

Let's explore some of the Christological positions that sprung out of the early church...

See Appendix A

Out of these many doctrines, it was Trinitarianism that prevailed as becoming "orthodoxy". Hence, this became known as being one of the most important tenets in mainstream Christian faith.

Let's explore the Christology of Trinitarianism:

History proves that it took approx 350 years and 3 ecumenical councils to discover who/what Jesus is. The **creed of Chalcedon** (451AD) best describes the Christology of Trinitarianism. Let's read...

See Appendix B

Q: Does this or any of the other Christology's mentioned, sound scripturally accurate?

Q: Was that indeed the Jesus of Hebraic prophecy? Of gospel history? Of apostolic witness?

2 Corinthians 11:4

V4 - "whom we have not preached" (ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν)

Listen to Paul's echoing words: this 'other' Jesus would be a Jesus that I have never heard/spoke of. These later Christological developments would've sounded so foreign to the apostles of the 1st church.

I could honestly hear Paul saying something to the effect of....

"All this talk of 'other' Jesus' - I have not understood him in any of those manners.

I know not of their terms, words, titles, concepts or suppositions.

All of their preaching and doctrine of this 'Jesus' is radically foreign, strange and very unfamiliar to me. It is an alien Jesus."

– **Paul the Apostle**

Paul nor the other apostles, preached the Jesus that sprouted from these later doctrines.

Let's explore the language used in Trinitarian Christology to see if any of this can be found in the NT...

1) **Consubstantial** (gr. ομοούσιος) - e.g. same substance, essence

2) **Hypostatic union** (gr. υποστατικής ενώσεως) - e.g. union between the divine/human nature in one person

Hebrews 1:1 - 3 (None of the words appear in the Bible, yet many will plead these ideas from this text)

V3 - "exact representation of His nature" (χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως)

(χαρακτήρ) - Lit. engraving tool, engrave into; impress, exact likeness - where we get the word "character"

(ὑποστάσεως) - the essential or basic nature of an entity; substance, real being

This doesn't prove that God the son is of the "same" essence as the Father, nor of him being dual-natured.

It speaks of the reality of the human Son: he portrayed the character of God in his life
Jesus fully and perfectly expressed in word/deed everything that God is like

"...he who has seen me has seen the Father..." - **John 14:9**

3) **Eternally begotten** (gr. αιώνια γεννηθέντα) - e.g. created from eternity

This term is not in the Bible, but rather an oxymoron - i.e. all things begotten are made, hence not eternal

Matthew 1:18 - 20

V18 - "the birth of Jesus Christ" (Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ γένεσις οὕτως)

V20 - "for that which has been conceived (begotten) in her" (τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ γεννηθὲν)

(γένεσις / γεννηθὲν) - beget; coming into existence by birth; male role in procreation; female in giving birth

While many believe God the son was eternally begotten, the gospels record Jesus being begotten in time
The son's existence began in the womb of his mother; yes, there was a time when the son was NOT

"...therefore also the holy-begotten thing shall be called the son of God..." - **Luke 1:35**

4) **Pre-existence** (gr. προϋπάρχω) - e.g. to exist beforehand; exist in a former state

This word does appear 2 times in the Bible, yet it speaks nothing of Jesus Christ...

"...Herod and Pilate became friends that very day; **for before** they had been at enmity..." - **Luke 23:12**

"...there was a certain man named Simon, **who formerly** was practicing magic in the city..." - **Acts 8:9**

John 1:1 (Yet many Trinitarians tirelessly defend the notion that Jesus pre-existed by invoking this text)

V1 - (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος)

(λόγος) - a statement, speech, message, saying

Many wrongly assert that the "λόγος" spoken of here is God the son and hence ontologically pre-existent
356 times the word "λόγος" is used in the NT, only 2 times is it used for Jesus (John 1:14, Rev 19:13)

The "λόγος" is not a person, but God's utterance of His plans; hence God's word always eternally existed

5) **Incarnation** (gr. ενσάρκωση) - e.g. deity / spirit taking on bodily form

John 1:14 (This word does not appear in the Bible, yet many appeal to the idea by invoking this text)

V14 - "and the word became flesh" (Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο)

It's wrong to assume that the "λόγος" is the pre-existent Christ and that this text speaks of his incarnation

The "λόγος" is God's utterance; what John had in his mind when he penned this verse was:
Everything God uttered in the OT, in laws, prophecies and poetry, was regarding the Messiah
All of God's words began to come to pass the day Jesus came into existence...

Jesus became the living and human expression of God's wisdom that was penned in the Scriptures

"...you search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these testify of me..." - **John 5:39**

"...for if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me..." - **John 5:46**

2 Corinthians 11:4

V4 - "whom we have not preached" (ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν)

All of these metaphysical, extra-biblical words would've sounded foreign to Paul and the other apostles
Let's explore the Scriptures to see what the biblical witness is concerning the Jesus of history...

1 Peter 1:18 - 21

V20 - "he was indeed foreordained" (προγινώσκω)

V20 - "but has appeared" (φανερώω)

(προγινώσκω) - to know something beforehand; to know an event before it happens; foreknowledge

(φανερώω) - to make known, to show, to reveal, make appear, visible

The whole context has to do with the Lamb of God, the human Messiah, Jesus, not God the son (**v19**)
Peter emphatically states that God foreordained this man before even the worlds were made
From the beginning, God knew of this man, Jesus - and had chosen him to be the Christ

At the open of the NT, God decided to make known of this man to the world, by bringing him into existence
Thus, Jesus, appeared in human history and began to carry out the tasks as God's anointed
Hence Jesus was not pre-existent; he was foreknown!

"...when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His son, born of a woman..." - **Galatians 4:4**

God's foreknowledge is about knowing all things, peoples, before they were even created. E.g. Jeremiah:

"...before I formed you in the womb, I knew you...I ordained you a prophet to the nations..." - **Jeremiah 1:5**

God ordained everything about Jesus, his life and mission, before he was even created
Let's explore God's foreknowledge of this man, Jesus...

"...for You loved me before the foundation of the world..." - **John 17:24**

"...the lamb slain from the foundation of the world..." - **Revelation 13:8**

Let's explore the apostolic preaching of God's foreordained Messiah

Let's look for clues that will help to see how the 1st church understood Jesus to be...

Acts 2:22 - 36

1) he came from Nazareth (**v22**)

2) he was a man (**v22**)

3) he was put to death (**v23**)

4) he was raised from the dead (**v24, 32**)

5) he was a descendant of David (**v30**)

6) he was destined to be a king, like David (**v30**)

Q: do all of these traits / descriptions sound like a human being, or a God-man?

It indeed sounds like this Jesus of the Bible is physiologically, biologically, mortally human!

Do note how much of Peter's preaching of Jesus is rooted in God's foreknowledge. Let's see...

1) his death was purposed and foreknown by God (**v23**)

2) his resurrection was prophesied by David (**v25 - 29, 30 - 31**)

3) his exaltation as king was prophesied by David (**v34 - 35**)

Peter's preaching of Jesus as Messiah is rooted completely in God's foreknowledge

God's foreknowledge was transmitted to the OT prophets of whose writings became the Scriptures!

Peter, Paul and the apostles preached a foreknown, foreordained Christ, not a pre-existent one!

Q: What has caused many to turn away and embrace and preach 'another' Jesus?

A: There are several reasons. Let's explore:

2 Corinthians 11:3

"deceived" (ἐξηπάτησεν) - to cause someone to have misleading or erroneous views concerning the truth

"minds" (νοήματα) - the psychological faculty of understanding, reasoning, thinking and deciding

"astray" (φθορῆ) - to ruin, destroy and corrupt

It began with a lie - E.g. 'Is Jesus really only human or is he more?'

When the lie entered into the mind, it corrupted their ability to reasonably understand the Scriptures!

2 Timothy 4:2 - 5

With corrupt minds, these men were not able any more to tolerate the healthy exposition of the word (v3)
Reason? Corrupt minds have itching ears, desiring to hear something new, unheard-of (v3)
Hence, they went out, seeking teachers who would tell them what they wanted to hear (v3)

And what did they turn (ἐκτραπήσονται) to when they accumulated these teachers? Fables (v4)
(ἐκτραπήσονται) - to swerve, to dislocate, sprain, to put out of joint
(μύθους) - tales, folk-lore, fanciful, yet un-true stories, legends

These men embraced legendary stories of supernatural beings that were capable of being gods and men
And these ideas and concepts were mixed in with the Bible - the result: "the Jesus legends"

Every "church father", "bishop" and "church" had a fanciful, legendary story of a God-man called "Jesus"
It never dawned on them that their Christology resembled Greek philosophy with its mythological gods
E.g. In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas were deified when the people said...

"...the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men..." - **Acts 14:11**

To Paul, this was a sure sign that they turned away from the truth (v4)
These later Christological doctrines ought to indicate to us that those who embraced them had indeed
abandoned the truth!

Let me point out the great harm many have caused to God's word concerning the truth of His Messiah...

The Jews rejected him, the Gentiles redefined him!

Q: What is required for the church to abandon "the Jesus legends" and return to the truth of Scripture?

A: We need to "pay attention" to the prophetic voice of Scripture and let it illuminate our hearts...

2 Peter 1:15 - 21

What the disciples witnessed was the destiny of the son of man to glory as God's anointed king (v16 - 18)
Peter said, "What we saw was not fiction, no legend, or fanciful tale" (v16)
What they saw confirmed the word of prophecy from the OT (v19)

When this is heeded, embraced and given attention to, can the church once again understand the Jesus of the Bible!

Thank you very much.

Appendix A

Docetism (gr. δοκεῖν) - to seem

*. Date: possibly around 70AD

Docetism was the belief that all matter is evil. Consequently, Jesus could not have had a physical body; it only seemed like he had. It was believed that Jesus' physical body was an illusion as was his death on the cross. He did not physically die because, in reality, he was incorporeal - **a pure spirit**, and thus could not have physically died.

Sabellianism

*. Date: possibly between 200 - 220AD

Sabellianism (modalistic monarchianism) was the belief that God was unipersonal but manifested Himself through three different faces / personas: as the Father in the OT, as the son at the incarnation and as the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension. This doctrine taught that God, who played the role of father, was the same person who played the role of the son - Jesus.

Patripassianism (It. patri and passio) - father, suffering

*. Date: possibly around 250AD

Patripassianism believed that God the Father was incarnated as the son. Whatever happened to the son here on the earth was believed to have happened to the Father also. Hence in regards to the cross, when the son suffered, the Father suffered too. This group have often been accused of believing that **God died** on the cross. This doctrine was closely related with Sabellianism.

Arianism

*. Date: possibly around 310AD

Arianism was the belief that the son did not exist eternally with God the Father. They believed the son to be a created being, begotten by God as the first in God's work of creation (hence pre-existent) - giving rise to the notion that there was a time when the son was not).

Trinitarianism

*. Date: developed from 215 - 451AD

Trinitarianism was the belief of explaining the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as three persons (gr. hypostases) in the one divine being (gr. ousia) called the Godhead (old English word) - which is the divine essence of God. According to this doctrine, God exists as **three persons**, but is still one God. All three persons share in the same divine nature. Whatever attributes and powers God the Father has, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have as well. Thus it is said that all three are omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal and equal. At the appointed time, God the Son incarnated himself into human history as the man, Jesus Christ - leading to the popular idea of his pre-existence. By due reason of his incarnation, it was believed that Jesus had two natures: divine and human natures (of what is commonly referred to as the Hypostatic union).

Apollinarianism

*. Date: possibly between 350 - 381AD

Apollinarianism placed heavy emphasis on the deity of Christ. This led to the rejection that Jesus was truly human. It was believed that in Christ's human nature, he may have had a human body, but not a human soul / mind. Rather it was replaced in him by the logos - that he was governed by a divine mind. Thus, Jesus was simply a glorified and **spiritualized form of human**. This was a reaction against the belief that Jesus had 2 natures.

Nestorianism

*. Date: possibly around 428 - 431AD

Nestorianism was an attempt to explain the incarnation of the divine logos, as the man Jesus Christ. It was the belief that Christ was both divine and human. It was believed that Jesus, who was not the son, but was personally united with the son, who lived in him, become of one hypostasis "one essence" and one nature: human. Yet it stressed the distinction of these two natures so far that it appeared that **two persons** were living in the same body.

Appendix B

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach people to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God (μονογενή Θεόν), the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.