

Dr. David L. Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 20, Jesus, Messiah/God, Part 1

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 20, Jesus, Messiah/God, Part 1.

The next theological theme, especially the New Testament theological theme that we want to consider and develop, is related to the person of Christ.

We'll look at it over four or so sections, a couple dealing with the person of Christ as Messiah and God, and then also looking at what Christ accomplishes, focusing specifically on Christ's death and resurrection. So, there's much that we could say, but we'll focus on those areas. We've already noted the significant role that Jesus Christ plays in the fulfillment and ultimate expression and development of these biblical-theological themes, whether it is creation, Jesus bringing about the new creation by his own resurrection, people of God where Jesus himself embodies Israel's purposes and destiny, whether it is the theme of new exodus where Jesus himself brings about a new exodus, new covenant where Jesus' death ratifies and establishes the new covenant that God makes with his people, and all of the covenants in fact.

Image of God where Jesus is the true image of God. All of the Old Testament themes and their relationship to each other, as well as the entire plotline and story of God redemptively dealing with his history, ultimately find their culmination in the person of Jesus Christ. So much of what we've said already presupposes and focuses on the significance of the person of Jesus Christ.

New Testament theology is Christologically focused in that all the strands find their climax in the person of Christ, who brings them to fulfillment. Some scholars like to quote Paul's words that all the promises of God are true in Jesus Christ. They all find their fulfillment and their climax in the person of Jesus Christ.

Then we saw ultimately and frequently, those promises get fulfilled in his people. They spread out to embrace his people by virtue of the fact that they belong to him through faith. But they, first of all, find their apex in the person of Christ.

So, what I want to do is spend time looking at the New Testament's emphasis on and portrayal of Jesus Christ. We've already seen the Old Testament background, for example, for a messianic figure, greater son of David, and we'll look at some of those texts again. But I want to look more specifically at the person of Jesus Christ.

Not just to defend the deity of Christ or defend a certain perspective on Christ, but again to look at it in light of how Christ fits into and how an understanding of Christ contributes to our broader understanding of New Testament theology and redemptive-historical outworking of God's plan, starting back with Genesis 1 and 2. But hopefully, I want to avoid overlapping too much with some of the things we've said as far as Christ fulfilling creation, new creation, land, people of God, new covenant, image of God, etc. Assuming all of that is the case, we'll hopefully look at other areas and themes related to the understanding of Christ. Now, the starting point, I think, is with the Gospels, obviously, and the Gospel's portrait of Christ, Christ's own self-understanding.

So, we'll move canonically again to look at the person of Christ as presented in the Gospels. We'll also look at not only Christ's activities and how Christ is presented, but we'll look at a handful of specific titles that are common in the Gospels that the writers used to designate Jesus Christ or that Christ uses to designate himself. Then we'll move on to the rest of the New Testament, beginning with the Pauline literature, moving on to some of the other New Testament texts outside of Paul's letters, and then once more as we have been, climaxing with the book of Revelation.

While Revelation is often relegated to a role of contributing to our eschatology, Revelation has one of the richest Christologies of any book that I found in the New Testament, I would argue. But we'll start with the Gospels, again looking at Jesus' presentation of himself, the presentation of the Gospel writers concerning Christ, and what they emphasize about Jesus, and then noting some of the common titles of Jesus that the authors used to designate him or that Jesus often uses of himself. Starting with the Gospels, then, to make a broad statement is the Gospel writers are in agreement, I think, that Jesus is the climax of the Old Testament story, that the redemptive story of God dealing with his people now reaches its climax in the person of Christ.

So, not just the people of God or not just the salvation that God brings to his people, though yes, that's true, but first of all, Jesus Christ is the climax of the Old Testament story. As I think we've already noted, this cannot be seen more clearly than in Matthew chapters 1 and 2, where we saw Jesus recapitulating the old Jesus' own story, his own narrative of even his childhood, is seen already as recapitulating and fulfilling the story of Israel and the story of God's promises to his people. We already noted that in Matthew chapter 1 and verse 1, Matthew begs us to read this in connection with the Old Testament story when he says Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham.

He begs us to read the rest of his own narrative and story as part of, as a fulfillment of, the Old Testament story and narrative and the great covenants that God makes with his people, such as Abraham and David. And the reading of the rest of Matthew bears that out. We don't have time to move through the entirety of Matthew, but

the rest of Matthew, as well as Mark and the other Gospels, bear that out, that Jesus over and over again is seen as completing or climaxing another story, that is, the Old Testament one.

To move on to simply, what I want to do is highlight other key themes or key ways that Jesus is presented in the Gospels. Up front, Jesus is also presented as God himself. That is, in the Gospels, we often find some of the strongest statements for what systematic theologians call the deity of Christ or the divinity of Christ that is providing the information for later Trinitarian formulations of Jesus being God himself, Jesus sharing in the very character, the very essence of God.

Though the New Testament authors do not use that kind of language, certainly, we find plenty of material in the Gospels themselves that would lead to and would begin to suggest later Christological formulations in some of the later church confessions and things like that, and later creeds. So, Jesus is the Son of God. One of the Gospels' clearest presentations is found in John chapter 1. Although John chapter 1 and verse 1 are usually the text that we point to, it is actually the entirety of the prologue, the first 18 verses, that together demonstrate who Jesus is and how the author wants us to understand his presentation in the rest of the Gospel.

It is in the entirety of chapter 1 that the author, I think, clearly presents Jesus Christ as, in some way, God himself. That is, the author does not describe it in the language of later creeds, but certainly, the author wants us to understand that Jesus is to be equated with God. He starts that in the very first verse with an allusion to Genesis in the beginning and then a reference to the fact that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, but more than that, the Word was God.

I do not have time to go into and defend this grammatically, but against a number of other cults and religions that would claim that this is not supporting the deity of Christ, that Christ is being equated with a divine being, or with a God, but not the God of the Old Testament. I would argue that that is precisely what John is doing in chapter 1 and verse 1. So, he makes a rather significant statement that the God of the Old Testament, our understanding of the God of the Old Testament, who is responsible for creation, is now to be expanded to include Jesus Christ in some way. We will see that later on, New Testament writers did that without compromising their monotheism.

There was only one God to be confessed as God, and to worship or confess anyone or anything else as God was outright idolatry. Yet we find New Testament authors completely comfortable with including Jesus Christ within the one true God over and over again, and John does that here. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God in a unique relationship with God.

But furthermore, the Word was God. Then, notice the author goes on to attribute the creative activity to God himself. Through him, all things were made.

So, Jesus was the agent of creation. The Word was the agent of creation. Without him, nothing was made that has been made.

But to skip down to another verse we already read, the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father. In connection with the temple theme, I already mentioned Jesus Christ as the true temple, and this language of dwelling and glory was applied in the Old Testament to God's tabernacle and temple dwelling to God's presence in the Tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament.

So, the author now finds the very glory, the very tabernacling presence of God, the very temple presence of God, and it now resides in the person of Jesus Christ, which again later on Jesus will claim to be the true temple or the author will claim that Jesus Christ's own body is the temple. And then finally, in verse 18, to kind of climax these references to Christ's deity, Jesus is God. He is not only with God; he is God, the creator God in chapter 1, verse 1. In Christ is the manifestation of God's presence.

In the incarnate Christ, the very temple tabernacling presence of God resides. Now, verse 18 ends by saying that no one has ever seen God, a common Old Testament motif, but the one and only Son, Jesus Christ, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. So, the notion is that Jesus Christ has now made the invisible God visible.

If one wants to know what God is like or what God looks like, look at Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is best able to reveal God because he himself is God. The very one who at the very beginning was with God, and who is God, the one in whom God's tabernacling presence resides, is now able to reveal God because he himself is God.

God has now visibly been made known through the incarnate Jesus Christ, who himself is God. So chapter 1 verses 1 through 18, in its entirety, not just John 1:1, but the entire section of John 1 verses 1:18, not only sets us up for how to read the rest of the gospel and to understand the author's portrayal of Christ but also is one of the clearest statements of the fact that Jesus as the Logos, the word Logos suggesting revelation or discourse or speech, Jesus is the very revelation, Jesus is God's final revelation to the world. Jesus is the very speech, the very discourse of God, the very presence of God that has now been manifest in the incarnate Jesus Christ, who makes the invisible God visible.

Related to this is, and to sort of introduce a prominent theme in the Gospels, is we also find Jesus performing activities that in the Old Testament are attributed to God.

So, this idea of Jesus being the climax of God's revelation of himself, of God's redemptive activity. So, you find God promising to do things for his people in the Old Testament that now Jesus does in the New Testament.

So, for example, Jesus forgives sins in Mark, which often got him into trouble, such as in Mark chapter 2. Mark chapter 2 is a story of Jesus healing a paralytic or a paralyzed man. I won't go into all the details, but Jesus is in Capernaum preaching, and some individuals bring a paralyzed man to him. And what happens is Jesus sees their faith and says to the paralyzed man, Son, it's interesting he doesn't heal him first, but instead he says, Son, your sins are forgiven.

Now, some of the teachers of the law, verse 6, were sitting there thinking to themselves, why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? And it's interesting Jesus does not jump in and say, well, I'm not claiming to be God. I forgive sins, but I'm just doing it. He could have perhaps talked his way out of that.

But it's interesting that the Pharisees equate Jesus' forgiveness of sins with something that only God can do. And Jesus and no one else seems to refute that in this text. So, what you have, again, my point is not just to draw on this as a proof text for Jesus' deity, but again, more as a demonstration of the fact that this dominant theme, where what God promises to do for his people in the Old Testament now gets accomplished, now gets fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

So, God's promise to forgive sins in the Old Testament, the fact that God will forgive sins under the new covenant in the Old Testament, is now accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ. Another interesting theme in connection with Jesus is the fact that Jesus is now becoming the object of the church's devotion and worship. So, for example, you come to the very end of Matthew and the great, what we often label the Great Commission, verse 16 begins, then the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted. Also, Luke chapter 24 and verse 52, towards the very end of Luke chapter 24 and verse 52. I'll read verse 50.

This is after Jesus' death and after his resurrection, then beginning, leading up to his ascension. When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them.

He was ascended. He was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him.

His followers worshiped him, and then they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. So, what we see already taking place, and we'll see this theme climax with a vengeance in the book of Revelation, and that Jesus is beginning to become the object of the

church's devotion and worship. Once more, what is significant about that is the church begins to include Jesus Christ in worship, which only belonged to God.

Again, this is in the context of the monotheism of the early believers in their day. To worship anything else, to worship anyone else, was idolatry. Yet, we find them expressing their devotion to and their worship of the person of Jesus Christ without violating Jewish monotheism and idolatry for worshiping anything else but God.

In other words, again, the early church began to give devotion and worship that belonged only to God, now to the person of Jesus Christ. In connection with a number of these things, we also find Jesus Christ is portrayed as the pre-existent Son of God throughout the beginning, an allusion to Genesis chapters 1 and 2; we find the word with God and the word then God himself. Interestingly, a number of other texts seem to suggest something similar, and again, this is not just pulling out a set of proof texts here and there to prove Jesus' deity but once more highlighting a dominant theological theme that demonstrates God's redemptive plan now coming to a climax in the person of Jesus Christ.

For example, Matthew chapter 23 and verses 34 through 37. Notice how Jesus is described. At that time, Jesus says, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. All things have been commanded to me by the Father, verse 37. So, interestingly, you can't help but read this and ask the question, what kind of person is this that says there are hidden things that only the Father knows that have now been revealed through the Son, that God now has chosen to reveal through the Son, Jesus Christ.

Again, couple that with a text like Matthew chapter 23 and verses 34 through 37. Matthew chapter 23 and verses 34 through 37. Therefore, I am sending you prophets, sages, and teachers.

Some of them you will kill and crucify. Others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue in your towns. And so, upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Truly, I tell you, all this will come on this generation. I think I meant the Luke text, perhaps Luke chapter 23, verses 34 through 37. Let me go over there quickly.

Luke 23:34 through 37. That's actually not it, either. Let me just stick with the Matthew text and also refer to a book written by Simon Gathercole, where he

argues this notion of Jesus that we just found in the passage I read back in Matthew 11.

This notion is that Jesus reveals knowledge that comes from outside of the world. There are things that belong only to the Father that Jesus now reveals. Connected with an observation by Simon Gathercole in a book dealing with the pre-existent Son of God, he argues that throughout the gospels, you find several references to Jesus coming.

Again, I want to stress that we're not just drawing on a bunch of proof texts to prove the deity of Christ. We're looking at a dominant theological theme. Those are several references to Jesus coming to do things.

For example, Gathercole argues Jesus comes to call sinners, or Jesus comes to fulfill the law, or Jesus comes to preach the good news, or Jesus comes to seek and save the lost. Jesus comes to do different things. Gathercole argues that this implies Jesus comes from outside of the sphere of human existence.

He comes to earth from the heavenly realm, applying that this is a pre-existent being. This is not just God selecting a human being like he did Moses, Abraham, Isaac, David, or whoever. But now this is a pre-existent being who comes from outside of the sphere of human existence.

He comes from the heavenly realms now to accomplish God's purpose. So, I would agree there's a common motif throughout the gospels of Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God who now comes to communicate God's will to his people, to bring God's salvation to his people. Jesus is another theme connected with chapter one.

Another theme is Jesus is God's own self-revelation. We saw the notion of logos. Jesus, as the word suggests Jesus, is God's own self-revelation.

The invisible God is now made visible through the Son who has revealed. Some of you know that in John 1:18 the word there could be translated, the Son exegetes him. It's the word to make known or reveal, from which we get the word exegesis, which refers to unpacking the meaning of a text through careful study.

Jesus has exegeted or made known or interpreted and revealed God, the invisible God, has now been revealed through the person of Jesus Christ. That becomes a dominant theme not only in the gospels but also in the other sections of the New Testament, where Jesus is the very revelation of God himself. God reveals himself through the person of Jesus Christ.

Another dominant theme is the fact that Jesus is God's wisdom. In the Old Testament and in Jewish literature, wisdom would have been found in or identified with the

Torah. So, for example, in Proverbs, in the book of Proverbs, we find this even more clearly in other Jewish literature.

But even in the Proverbs, we find wisdom equated with the Torah, learning the Torah, and obeying it. Proverbs chapter 2 and verses 1 and 2. Just to give one example, My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding. Chapter 3 and verse 1, My son, do not forget my teaching but keep my commands in your heart for they will prolong your life.

Again, we see this developed in other Jewish writings where wisdom is identified with the Torah or wisdom is found in the Torah. Now interestingly, Jesus now offers for people to come to him and learn. Jesus offers for people to take his yoke upon them.

Both coming to the idea of coming to someone to something to learn or someone to learn or taking one's yoke in some Jewish literature again was associated with the Torah. Now we find Jesus, for example. To go back to the book of Matthew, we find Jesus claiming to be the one to which we now come to learn. So, we find Jesus, in a sense, claiming to be the true wisdom that comes from God.

So, wisdom now is going to be found in the person of Jesus Christ. So, in Matthew chapter 11, starting in verse 20, actually verse 25, Jesus said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to his little children. Now, notice what Jesus says in verse 28.

After making this statement that these hidden things have been revealed to little children, now he says in verse 28, Come to me, Jesus says, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart.

For my yoke is easy, my burden is light. So, I think what Jesus is claiming here is to be the true wisdom of God. In him is found wisdom.

One goes to Jesus to learn wisdom. One goes to Jesus to take on the yoke of learning, which was originally associated with the Torah. And then later on in chapter 12, the next chapter, chapter 12 and verses 41 and 42, Jesus says, The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented of the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here.

But then he goes on and says, The queen of the south will rise up 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. Jesus referring to himself. So, Jesus is God's wisdom.

One now comes to Jesus to learn, comes and takes his yoke upon them. Another motif is Jesus reveals himself through his miracles. We saw that these miracles inaugurated the old covenant, or I'm sorry, the new creation.

Jesus' miracles inaugurated the new creation, and they also revealed his identity. Again, I think we often suggest that we find Jesus accomplishing God's purposes because we find Jesus performing acts or doing things that God himself was to do in the Old Testament. So, that motif that God's prerogatives and activities that are attributed to God are now found in Jesus Christ or are now accomplished by the person of Jesus Christ.

One of the clear places we find that is in Matthew chapter 8. This is Matthew's account of the stilling of the storm. When Jesus and the disciples go out into the sea or the lake of Galilee in a boat, and there arises a storm, and Jesus is sleeping, and they have to wake him, and Jesus speaks, and the wind and the waves are calmed. And the disciples say, what manner of man is this that even the wind and the waves obey him? Now, what is significant about that and why the disciples would raise such a question and make such a statement is not just that they're wowed by what Jesus has done. Although that is true, we should probably read this in light of statements such as Psalm 107.

Again, I'm only going to give you a couple of representative texts, but Psalm 107 and verses 23 and following. Someone out on the sea and ships, they were merchants on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the Lord, his wonderful deeds in the deep. For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves.

They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths. In their peril, their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunkards.

They were at their wit's end. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper.

The waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. I'll stop right there, but do you see the connection in Psalm 107? God is the one who stills the storm.

God is the one who speaks and stills the storm to a whisper and causes the waves to be hushed. Now, that's what Jesus does in Matthew chapter 8. We could point to other texts, such as Isaiah 51:9 through 10, that we read in the context of God dealing with the Exodus Sea.

So, the point is now we see Jesus in his miracles revealing his identity. That is, we now find him performing things like stilling storms and dealing with the chaotic sea in

a manner that was only attributed to God in the Old Testament. One other interesting thing we find, we find in the Gospels is that a response to Jesus determines getting into his kingdom.

So, once more, I look at the Matthew text, though a number of these texts have parallels in the other Gospels, so I won't read all three accounts. But chapter 11, Matthew chapter 11. Actually, I'll start with chapter 10 and verse 16.

Matthew 10 verse 16. I'll read 11:20 through 24. Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed because they did not repent.

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.

If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, they would have remained to this day. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you. In other words, what is going on here, interestingly, is that judgment is now predicated in response to Jesus and his miracles.

Likewise, we find places where inclusion in the kingdom of God is predicated upon one's response to Jesus Christ. So now, one's response to Jesus determines whether one gets in or whether one is excluded from the kingdom of God. So, to summarize all this, we find, I think, the dominant theme throughout the gospel is that Jesus, and there's much that we could say, but to kind of highlight the most prominent themes in the New Testament related to Christ, is Jesus Christ then comes to accomplish God's own saving purposes.

God promises to save his people in the Old Testament. He promises to gather people. He promises to bring about a new covenant.

He promises to bring righteousness. He promises to establish his kingdom and rule among his people. He promises to save his people from their sins.

He promises to pour out the Spirit on them. He promises his tabernacling presence with his people. Now, all of this is done through Jesus Christ.

So, the gospels then present Jesus as the climax of the Old Testament story, as performing and accomplishing the saving activity that God himself promises in the

Old Testament. But he does so as the one who uniquely reveals God as the one who is God. Now, in addition to that, look at just a handful of titles.

Often, our understanding of Jesus can be seen in the titles that he uses to refer to himself or that the writers or others designate Jesus by—for example, the title of Messiah. I don't want to spend a whole lot of time on this because we've spent quite a bit on the theme of Messiah or Jesus as the Davidic King.

But again, the Old Testament background for the title of Messiah used of Jesus is the Old Testament expectations of a coming King, a Messianic Deliverer. You can go back and refer to our previous discussions of the Davidic Covenant where Psalm 2, Psalm 110, 2 Samuel 7:14, Psalm 89, Ezekiel 36 and 37 expect a Davidic Deliverer. All of those provide the backdrop for a coming anointed one referring here specifically to a Davidic King, a Davidic figure.

To add just a couple of other texts that we have not referred to in the Old Testament, Isaiah chapter 11 and starting with verse 1. Again, in the context of Isaiah's anticipation of restoration from exile, the author says, A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse, from his roots, a branch will bear fruit. The spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and might, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord. That language of a shoot from the stump of Jesse, a branch from his roots that will bear fruit, is a Messianic language referring to a Messiah.

Jeremiah chapter 23, a text that we have not referred to yet, 23 and verses 5 and 6. The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days, Judah would be saved, and Israel would live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called, the Lord our righteous Savior.

So, once more, a prophetic text is anticipating a coming Davidic figure based on 2 Samuel 7 and reflecting what we find in other Psalms texts. So, when we come to the Old Testament, we find that Jesus is, although interestingly, Jesus never claims this title for himself. He doesn't go around saying I'm the Messiah. I'm the coming Messiah.

Jesus certainly does things and acts out Messianic scripts and Messianic roles. For example, when he rode into Jerusalem, Other things that Jesus did fulfill what the Messiah was to do, what this greater son of David was to do.

But that simply raises the question, why does Jesus, number 1, why does Jesus not claim to be the Messiah, even though others claim he is? And even though Jesus does things that are Messianic, he acts out what the Messiah was to do. Why does Jesus never claim to be the Messiah? And furthermore, why does Jesus command

silence when people say he is the Messiah? Most likely, the reason is simply because there may be a couple of reasons, but perhaps the most prominent one is to avoid misunderstanding.

Jesus, by going around and claiming to be the Messiah, may have raised inappropriate expectations among the people. That there is the political, military deliverer that will rule with the iron scepter, and he is going to come and wipe out Rome and deliver us from the oppression of Rome. When Jesus clearly claims that he first came to save his people from their sins, Jesus will come to suffer and die.

And sometimes, even the disciples could not put those two together. That Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, which is what Peter confesses. You are the Messiah, the Christ, the son of the living God.

Yet when Jesus then says, I am going to suffer and die, Peter rejects that. Peter cannot fathom that Jesus would come as a suffering Messiah. So perhaps one of the reasons, and perhaps the main reason why Jesus avoided that title and why he commanded silence when people claimed he was the Messiah, appears to be a strange evangelistic tool, but Jesus is probably avoiding misunderstanding.

He did not want people to misunderstand what type of Messiah he was, but clearly, Jesus claims to be the Messiah who now brings the kingdom of God to the people. The very fact that he claimed to bring the kingdom of God suggests that he is the king or the son of David, who now comes to fulfill that.

Jesus then believed he was the Messiah. Jesus acted out as the Messiah. In fact, to go once more to Matthew, at the very end of Matthew chapter 26, Jesus tries to trial in Matthew chapter 6. When he is under oath at his trial, he does, in fact, claim to be the Messiah.

So, Matthew 26 and verses 23 and 24. Let's see, I think I have the wrong text again. I'll look for that later.

At his trial, before being condemned to death, when asked if he is the Messiah, Jesus himself confesses that, and Jesus himself says, yes, that is who I am. In fact, I believe that chapter 27 is the one that I want. But Jesus before Pilate claims himself to, when under oath at his trial, claims to be the Messiah.

So, it's not quite true to say Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah, but he certainly did not run around saying that. But Jesus believed he was the Messiah and acted out as the Messiah, and so one of the dominant conceptions of Jesus in the Gospels is Jesus is the Messiah in fulfillment. He is the King, the Christ, in fulfillment of the Jewish expectations of a coming anointed Davidic King.

Another title, one that is far more common with Jesus and probably his favorite way of referring to himself, is the title Son of Man. Basically, Son of Man simply means a human being. This is how it's used in a number of contexts in Jewish literature.

It's used this way in the Old Testament. Psalm chapter 8 is used this way. But probably the appropriate background for Son of Man as it applies to Jesus is Daniel chapter 7 in verse 14, where Daniel sees a vision of a Son of Man that now comes and stands before the throne and receives a kingdom.

In other words, the Son of Man is an exalted heavenly figure that receives a kingdom and receives authority. Over against the other beastly kingdoms at the beginning of chapter 7, we now see a human figure opposing the beastly figures. Daniel sees a human figure, a Son of Man, who now is a heavenly exalted figure that receives authority.

So that probably provides the most likely background for Jesus' Son of Man imagery and the Son of Man imagery found in the Gospels. Again, this appears to be Jesus' favorite way of referring to himself rather than calling himself Messiah. It also may carry connotations of Adamic language.

Psalm chapter 8, what is the Son of Man that he would be treated in such a dignified manner? Son of Man, in Psalm 8, is not a reference, not a prediction of the Messiah. It's another way of referring again to a human being, this time to Adam. So, by claiming to be the Son of Man, this may also go back to text such as Psalm chapter 8, claiming Jesus is the new Adam who will accomplish what Adam failed to do.

Probably the most unique feature of the application of this title, Son of Man to Jesus, is Jesus using it in reference to his own suffering. For example, in Mark, chapter 9 and verse 12, See if I get this one right.

Psalm chapter 9 and verse 12. I'm sorry, Mark chapter 9 and verse 12 were again in the context of Jesus referring to himself as the Son of Man. Jesus replied, to be sure, Elijah comes first and restores everything.

Why, then, is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? We can also point to another number of other verses where Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man who must suffer and die. So, one of the most unique features of the application of Son of Man, especially if it comes from Daniel 7, is the fact that it refers to Jesus as one who will suffer and die. So, to summarize the title of Son of Man, perhaps the reason is what's significant about the meaning of this term, and perhaps the reason why Jesus used it is because it was ambiguous.

Jesus is the exalted Son of Man who brings a kingdom and who will represent his people, yet he comes first of all to suffer and die. But as the Son of Man in Daniel 7, is

he will be vindicated as well. So, it's a term that didn't seem to carry a lot of connotations with it like Messiah did, and perhaps Jesus used it precisely because it was ambiguous.

It suggested he was the exalted heavenly Son of Man of Daniel 7 who would receive a kingdom and rule, but at the same time, he was the Son of Man who came to suffer and die for the people. Another title referring to Jesus is Son of God. Probably Son of God brings with it at least two or three references, two or three connotations.

First of all, Son could be seen in reference to Israel. Exodus chapter 4 and verse 22 is one of the texts that refers to Israel as God's son. So, Exodus 4, and I'll just read verse 22 and perhaps 23 as well.

Then say to Pharaoh, this is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you let my son go. God says let my son go so he may worship me. So, Israel is God's son at one level, but we also find the son in reference to the Davidic king.

For example, in Psalm chapter 2, there is a reference to the son of David or the king as God's son. We looked at this text a couple of times in reference to the kingdom of God, but also in reference to the Davidic covenant as well. But a text that is also applied to Jesus in the New Testament.

But Psalm chapter 2, starting with verse 6, I have installed my king on Zion, the Davidic son. On Mount Zion, my holy mountain, I will proclaim the Lord's decree. He said to me, you, God's dressing his son, you are my son.

Today, I have become your father. So, Son of God can also carry with it Davidic overtones as the son of God in David's line as a reference to the Messiah. We find it used as a messianic title.

For example, in Matthew chapter 16 and verse 16, in the context of Peter's confession of Jesus Christ, when Jesus asked them, who do people say that I am? And then, finally, he turns that question on Peter: who do you say that I am? Matthew chapter 16 and verse 16, Simon Peter said, you are the Messiah, the Christ, the son of the living God. Notice how Son of God is connected with Jesus being the Messiah. He's the Christ, the son of the living God.

So, Son of God also seemed to carry with it messianic connotations. We find the same thing in John chapter 1 and verse 48. Jesus and Nathanael, Nathanael says, how do you know me? Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you. Then Nathanael declared, Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the king of Israel.

So, calling Jesus Christ the son of God probably links Jesus back to his connection with Israel. Jesus is the true Israel, the true son of God, but also carries with it messianic connotations. Jesus is the Messiah, the son of David, the king of Israel.

But we also find, especially in John's gospel, that sonship, Jesus as the son of God, used Jesus' unique relationship with the Father. Jesus comes, as we already saw in chapter 1, Jesus himself is God. As the son of God, we find something interesting in John's gospel, as well.

That is, as Jesus is the son of God, Jesus is equal to God, yet he is also subordinate to the Father. We find Jesus as equal to the Father, as being God himself, yet we find Jesus as coming to do the Father's will. So, Jesus says things like, I come only to say what the Father has told me to say.

I come only to do the will of the Father. In other words, Jesus is God himself in his essence and being, but he functions; he comes to function to do the will of the Father. Again, this has provided some of the material for later Trinitarian formulations that you have one essence, God, that is equally shared by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, yet there is a functional distinction between them.

And certainly, John is consistent with that. So, Jesus is the son of God, the Messiah, the true Israel, but he is a son in a unique sense. He is a son who is a son in a unique relationship with his Father.

He is God himself who shares in the unique being and the unique authority of God, even though, as a son, he has come to do the will of the Father as well. So, son of God, perhaps suggesting Jesus' relationship to Israel, the fact that he is a messianic title, the fact that he is the son of David, the king of Israel, but he's also the son of God in a unique relationship with God and shares in the unique being of God and the unique authority of God and has come to do the father's will according to the Gospel of John. Now, one last thing, I don't know if I want to say title necessarily, but one last, perhaps, is the role that we find Jesus fulfilling, although the language is certainly used of Jesus, and that is the servant of God.

And I'm thinking particularly of Isaiah's understanding of servant, particularly in chapters 52 and 53, where Isaiah describes a servant who will come and take upon himself and deal with the sins of Israel, who will come and represent the people of God, that language of a lamb led to be slaughtered, and with his stripes we are healed are the most well-known verses in the servant section. But the servant language is much broader than that. But I think we find in Isaiah chapters 52 and 53, and more broadly in chapters 40 through 55, we find I think the servant actually being both corporate and individual in the book of Isaiah.

So, at one level, it seems to represent the nation of Israel; at another level, especially in chapters 52 and 53, it seems to represent someone who comes to bear the sins and the grief of Israel itself. Now, what we find in the Gospels is Jesus' own ministry, which fulfills the role of a servant. For example, in Matthew chapter 8 and verse 17, a very interesting text at the tail end of some of Jesus' healings, chapters 8 and 9 in Matthew being a section recording a number of healing miracles of Jesus, in chapter 8, we find verse 16, when evening came many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with the word, and he healed all the sick.

Then Matthew says, this was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: he took up our infirmities, and he bore our diseases. This quotation comes right out of Matthew chapter 53 and verse 4 in the Servant Songs. Also, note that probably one of the more well-known references to Jesus Christ, at least in Mark's Gospel, is Mark chapter 10 and verse 45.

For even the Son of Man did not come to serve, but to serve, or not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. Probably, the author is reflecting the language out of the Servant Songs in Isaiah chapter 53. So, Jesus clearly takes upon himself the designation or the role of the servant of Isaiah in chapters 52 and 53.

So, there are other titles that we could look at, but these titles are some of the more common ones in the Gospels that reveal something about who Jesus is and what he came to do in connection with the fulfillment of the Old Testament and what he came to do as God's unique revelation of himself and as God's means of accomplishing his redemptive purposes for the world and for humanity.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 20, Jesus, Messiah/God, Part 1.