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The Self Consciousness of Jesus in the Gospels
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"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples,
'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'
And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah,
and still others Jeremiah or one of the Prophets.'

He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'"

Matthew 16:13-15, Mark 8:27-29, Luke 9:18-20

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The question of Jesus' self-consciousness has long been debated by scholars with no clear cut answer in sight. The first question we need to ask is: can we *really* know who Jesus thought he was, historically? There is much debate as to which sources have sufficient evidence to be considered legitimate enough to answer this question. The bottom line is that anyone could bend the evidence to fit their claims. With that said, as much as I would like to avoid analyzing this issue historically, there is no way to prevent it. Up until the 18th and 19th centuries, people considered the Bible to be historical fact, without question. At this point in time, questions began to arise about how much truth there is to the Gospels. The Gospels are believed to be a mixture of theology and fact, but this was the beginning of the quest to find what is historically believable in the Gospels. Before we get into various theories about Jesus' self understanding, we will go through the canonical Gospels for some insight into how Jesus may have seen himself, then see what a few prominent historians and theologians have to say about the evidence in the Gospels, and what it really points to as far as Jesus' self-consciousness.

In this critical study, I will raise various aspects that might have been a part of Jesus' self-consciousness, such as that of a wisdom sage, a miracle worker, an exorcist, a religious and political reformer who challenges various regulations with ethics and common sense, and the possibility of a Messianic self-consciousness, both Davidic (royal) and Spiritual (Savior). For the sake of organization and clarity, I will look at each aspect of Jesus' self-consciousness within divisions of the Gospel Q and the synoptic Gospels by book. First, I will give a brief outline of the historical Jesus quest, then an introduction to each of the Gospel sources. When going through this study, one must keep in mind that I am choosing Q and the synoptic Gospels as my main sources for

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information regarding Jesus. After I have gone through the Synoptics, I will be presenting what a few contemporary historians have to say about Jesus in a critical analysis.

History of the Historical Jesus Quest

In Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz's *The Historical Jesus*, they divide the quest for the historical Jesus into five phases.¹ The first phase includes Hermann Samuel Reimarus, who wanted to delve into who Jesus was historically, apart from theology. He thought that the Gospel writers evoked their own theological beliefs into their writings about him. Thus, Reimarus believes that the Jesus in whom the Christian church believes is not the same as the historical Jesus. He explains the unhistorical through deceptions, such as claiming that the disciples stole and hid Jesus' body to uphold what the disciples and Jesus had led the people to believe. David Friedrich Strauss is another first phase theologian who, "no longer explains the unhistorical by deliberate deception but by an unconscious process of mythical imagination".² In other words, Strauss tends to see the Gospels mainly as myth, yet concludes that the Gospels could contain legitimate historical information.³

Phase two brought forth a higher interest in the Gospel of Mark and the hypothetical Gospel Q, and the theory that these two Gospels are the oldest reliable sources for the life of Jesus. This also started the two-source theory for the Gospels, meaning that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke used both the Gospels of Mark and Q as

¹ Theissen, Gerd and Annette Merz. *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 2-13.

² Ibid., 4.

³ See note 1 above.

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main sources for the writing of their gospels, while adding some of their own unique traditions into the mix.⁴

Albert Schweitzer, Rudolf Bultmann and William Wrede are the leading figures in the third phase. Schweitzer believed that the authors of the Gospels portrayed Jesus in a way that epitomized whatever virtue they wanted readers to take away from the reading. Wrede thought that the Gospel of Mark was centered around a “messianic secret theory,” projected onto Jesus after his resurrection. Because of his theories about Mark, Wrede does not believe that it is possible to set the history of Jesus apart from the way he was perceived by the writer, post-Easter.⁵ Bultmann asserted that knowing Jesus historically is basically impossible, and for Christians, the historical Jesus is irrelevant. Bultmann believes that the historical Jesus is the “Christ after Flesh” mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:16.⁶

Bultmann’s ideas carried on into the fourth phase (the “new quest”), where they wanted to “bridge the gulf between revelation and history.”⁷ A notable theologian of this phase is Ernst Käsemann, who concluded that even though the Gospels have much theological interpretation in them, that this is how people remember history, and make it relevant to their lives. He believes that Jesus needs to be looked at historically and theologically at the same time. Without the theological projections of the Gospel writers, there would not be much history left to study.⁸ In essence, this “new quest” as Theissen and Merz state “was primarily governed by a theological interest in finding a basis for

⁴ Theissen and Merz, 5, 25.

⁵ Ibid, 5-7.

⁶ Dawes, Gregory W., Ed. *The Historical Jesus Quest: Landmarks in the Search for the Jesus of History*. (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 2000), 239-240.

⁷ Theissen and Merz, 12.

⁸ Dawes, 276-279.

Christian identity by marking it off from Judaism and in safeguarding this identity by marking it off from the earliest Christian heresies (such as Gnosticism)."⁹

In the fifth phase ("third quest") the doors for research were opened to looking at where Jesus stands within Judaism, with an increased interest in social history and extra-canonical sources. The notable figures in this most recent period include E.P. Sanders, Geza Vermes and John Dominick Crossan, all of whom will be studied in greater depth later. For this study, the New Testament Gospels will be the main sources for looking at the self-consciousness of Jesus, including a brief look at the theoretical Gospel of Q; and what Vermes, Sanders and Crossan have to say about Jesus' understanding of himself.

Is the quest for the historical Jesus important? It is to a point. All belief systems require a certain amount of faith and trust in something. Although the Bible is not the "The Word" straight out of God's mouth, it is inspired by God and it holds some credibility. Since it is historically conditioned, it includes theological projections. However there is evidence outside the Gospels preserving some of the things noted in them and much of what is written in the Gospels regarding Jesus' context, contemporaries, and activities fits very reasonably within the context of first century Judaism in Palestine. The authors recorded it down in a way that was relevant to them and made an impact on them. The mere fact that multiple writers, even if they had some of the same sources, composed writings so similar raises their credibility in my mind. As we do not have Jesus physically on earth anymore, I believe that the Gospels are the closest available resource we have as insight into Jesus. If we weigh the Gospels' claims about the life of Jesus with a critical eye, we may at least be able to regard some proposals about his self-consciousness as more probable than others.

⁹ Theissen and Merz, 10.

Background of the Gospel Sources

Theissen and Merz point out that “age is not identical with historical proximity,”¹⁰ using the apostle Paul as evidence. Paul’s letters were written before any of the Gospels, but the Gospels are considered to be more historically accurate because Paul’s letters are steeped with his views of “Jesus as a pre-existent, mythical being.”¹¹ Paul did not actually know Jesus, and what can be known about Jesus through Paul’s writings is that he was crucified and resurrected. Paul did not address Jesus’ self-consciousness.

The Gospel of Q

It is commonly accepted among scholars, that the writers of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke had not only the Gospel of Mark with them as a source when they were writing, but another written source known to scholars today as “Q”, from the German word “Quelle”, meaning “source”. The reasoning for this is that there are over two hundred verses that are seen in both Matthew and Luke, but not in Mark.¹² Scholars do not believe that the authors of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke knew each other; so hypothesizing the existence of another written source to explain the commonalities between these two Gospels seems to be the only legitimate answer.

However, this source remains hypothetical because there is yet to be discovered a copy of this source anywhere. *The Lost Gospel Q: The Original Sayings Of Jesus* is the product of scholars going through Matthew and Luke, and isolating the verses that they believe to have been included in the hypothetical gospel of Q. The Lost Gospel Q includes no birth or passion narrative. As a matter of fact, the only narrative included is

¹⁰ Theissen and Merz, 17.

¹¹ See note above.

¹² Borg, Marcus et al., ed. *The Lost Gospel Q: The Original Sayings of Jesus*. (Publishers’ Group West, 1999.), 14.

that of the healing of the Centurion's servant, found in Q23.¹³ Q is considered to be a sayings gospel, including the sayings of Jesus and John the Baptist. Most scholars agree that the Gospel Q existed in written form. We do not have the capability to know exactly what was included in Q, however Borg's version serves as a nice parallel between Matthew and Luke. Nonetheless, of the sayings included in Borg's version of Q, not all of them are contained in both Matthew and Luke,¹⁴ and a few also have parallels with either Mark or John.¹⁵

In Borg's introduction, he states six things to be concluded about Jesus just from looking at Q, which are as follows:

“~ First, Jesus was a wisdom teacher with a metaphoric mind – a teacher of an unconventional wisdom, commonly expressed in memorable aphorisms

~Second, he was a radical cultural critic ... (with) sharp and passionate social criticism ... directed against wealth and against ruling elites ... Jesus threatens Jerusalem with divine judgment

~Third, Jesus was a religious ecstatic (who) had visions, undertook a wilderness ordeal, spent long hours in prayer, was said by his critics to be spirit possessed, and spoke of God with intimate metaphors

~Fourth ... he was a healer and exorcist. Though Q has only one healing story, it contains sayings about both healings and exorcisms.

~Fifth, the Q community spoke of Jesus as the Wisdom of God, and as the Son of God ...

~Sixth, the Jesus of Q spoke both of an apocalyptic eschatology (... supernatural intervention by God coming in the imminent future, stressing waiting for God to act) and a sapiential eschatology (ending of the world of consciousness and domination brought about response to an enlightened teacher).”¹⁶

¹³ MT 8:5-13, LK 7:1b-10.

¹⁴ For instance, Q sayings 3, 40, 49, 50, 72 and 79 are not found in a parallel in Matthew.

¹⁵ An example of this can be found with Q37, which is parallel with MT 12:22-28, LK 11:14-20 and MK 3:22-27 and will be addressed in the next section.

¹⁶ Borg, 19-20.

At this point, the question is this: how historically trustworthy is the Gospel Q? As a result of the many parallels between Matthew and Luke, one would assume that there is another written gospel that was used as a source. Though I do not deny the possible existence of this Logia source, I do question Borg's treatment and assumption of what he has included in the lost gospel Q. As mentioned before, when Borg edited this version of Q, he did not fill all his own criteria. While this does not entirely discredit the gospel Q, I have difficulty placing weight on this source alone and do not see the need to, as all the material included in Q is found elsewhere in the Synoptics.

The Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark was traditionally attributed to Peter's Roman companion, John Mark. Today it is considered to be the earliest written Gospel in the New Testament. It is generally accepted that the Gospel of Mark was written in around 70AD.¹⁷ The sources for Mark are unknown, but were probably oral traditions passed down. Theissen and Merz describe the Gospel of Mark "as a passion narrative with an extended biographical introduction. In it Jesus is surrounded by a mystery which is successively disclosed."¹⁸ According to Kingsbury, Mark's Gospel is more focused on the Passion, and Jesus' death on the cross, not on the second coming.¹⁹

¹⁷ *The HarperCollins Study Bible*. New Revised Standard Version. Ed. Wayne Meeks. (HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.), 1915-1916.

¹⁸ Theissen and Merz, 27.

¹⁹ Kingsbury, Jack Dean. *Jesus Christ in Matthew, Mark and Luke*. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1981), 28.

The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew is a narrative traditionally assumed to have been written by Matthew, one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Matthew used both the hypothetical Gospel Q and the Gospel of Mark as sources, as well as containing its own special material. Some of the references made in this Gospel about other events happening in history suggest that this Gospel was written between 80 and 90 C.E. Although it is not entirely impossible, it is questionable whether the disciple Matthew actually wrote this Gospel. "This Gospel contains a sharp anti-Pharisaism, moral stringency, and apocalyptic severity. Yet it has a marvelous vision of Jesus as the compassionate, healing Messiah/Son of David, the royal Son of God, and the apocalyptic Son of Man..."²⁰ The Harper Collins also calls the Gospel of Matthew

"reminiscent of a fusion of history, myth, and apocalyptic eschatology ... similar to an ancient Hellenistic 'biography' that lauds it's miracle-working hero. It has Jewish qualities as well: poetic parallelism; scribal argument; an emphasis on law, practice and piety; an interest in symbolic numbers; scriptural quotation and fulfillment; and a genealogy. It also has distinctive Christian elements, including accounts of the virgin Mary, church discipline, teaching, baptism, prayer, Jesus' last meal, the promise of his continuing presence, a special role for the apostle Peter and strongly developed views of Jesus as Messiah."²¹

The Gospel of Luke

This book is traditionally attributed to Luke, a physician and associate of the apostle Paul. It is considered to be the first of two volumes put together, the second being the book of Acts. The date of composition is uncertain, but is generally assumed to have

²⁰ *The HarperCollins Study Bible*. New Revised Standard Version. Ed. Wayne Meeks. (HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.), 1858. Information for this entire paragraph comes from 1857-1859.

²¹ *Ibid*, 1857.

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been written in the last third of the first century C.E. This Gospel is more theological than the other synoptic Gospels and stresses the fulfillment of the scriptures.²²

Jesus as a Miracle Worker and Exorcist

The Gospel of Q

Since the Gospel of Q is a sayings Gospel consisting mostly of the teachings of Jesus and John the Baptist, there are only four instances containing mention of Jesus healing, exorcising, or performing miracles. For example in Q23 we find the story of the healing of the Centurion's servant.²³ In Q9, there is relatively little information about what things Jesus was actually performing, but it says, "A great crowd of people from all parts of Judea, Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon had come to hear him and be cured of their diseases." ²⁴

In Q24, John the Baptist sends some of his disciples to ask Jesus

"Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus responds, "Go back and tell John what you hear and see: the blind see again, the lame walk, lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the poor are given good news. Blessed is the man who does not lose faith in me." ²⁵

This passage, with a look back into the Gospels of Matthew and Luke for clarification, conveys that Jesus understood himself as a miracle worker, a healer and as an exorcist. Note that Jesus says, "Blessed is the man who does not lose faith in me." However, Jesus was not the only person in existence at this time that could perform these sorts of things. Jesus addresses this point in Q37 saying,

²² *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, 1953-1954.

²³ MT 8:2-13, LK 7:1b-10.

²⁴ Parallel with MK 3:7-12, MT 5:1-3, 6; and LK 6:12, 17, 20-21.

²⁵ Borg, 58. Parallel to MT 11:2-6 and LK 7:18-23.

“If it is by the power of Beelzebul that I cast out demons, by whose power do your own people cast them out? If I rely on the help of the chief of demons to cast out demons, then Beelzebul’s own house is divided against itself. Every kingdom divided against itself will be destroyed, and a house divided in two will collapse. So if Satan’s house is divided, how can his kingdom survive? But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the reign of God has arrived!”²⁶

It takes only common sense to realize what Jesus is implying with this statement: he has the ability to perform these works by the hand of God. On the other hand, nowhere does it say that Jesus is the only human with powers such as these.

The Gospel of Mark

Throughout the Gospels, we have a picture of Jesus performing various miracles, healing people, exorcising demons, etc.²⁷ For example, in Mark 3:1-6 Jesus heals a man’s shriveled hand on the Sabbath, while several Pharisees were watching to see if he would break the Sabbath. “And he said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Come forward’. Then he said to them [the Pharisees], ‘Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?’ but they were silent.”²⁸ Apparently the Pharisees so diligently kept the Sabbath, that they would let someone die or suffer, rather than break the Sabbath. Jesus seems to be raising the question ‘Do you think that God really intended for you to sit idly by when you could be helping someone?’ At this point in time, it was basically unheard of that someone would suggest that God wants people to break the Sabbath.

One thing to keep in mind about Jesus performing miracles, exorcisms and such is that he was not the only person in existence that could do the same things. Yes, it is true

²⁶ Ibid, 71. Parallel to MT 12:22-28, LK 11:14-20 and MK 3:22-27.

²⁷ See appendix A for listing.

²⁸ Parallel with MT 12:9-14 and LK 6:6-11.

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that one does not need to have a messianic self-consciousness to have the ability to do these things, but Jesus stood out in other ways. In Mark 2:1-12²⁹, we have the story of four people letting a paralyzed man down through the roof of a house in Capernaum because there were so many other people waiting to be healed by Jesus.

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ‘Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, ‘Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’ – he said to the paralytic – ‘I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.’ And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’”

In Mark 3:22-27, we have Jesus defending himself against accusations of working miracles by the power of the devil:

“... How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder the house.”

In addition to the miracles and exorcisms discussed here, Appendix A contains a listing of the miracles and exorcisms as listed in Mark. As one can see from looking at these passages, some of them allude to a Messianic self-consciousness as well. This will be discussed more in depth in a later section.

²⁹ MT 9:1-8, LK 5:17-26, JN 5:1-9a.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke

“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness,”³⁰ states in general terms, some of the miracles Jesus was performing. For a slightly more detailed listing of the works Jesus performed, appendices B and C are a compilation of all the miracles, healings and exorcisms performed in these two Gospels. As one can see from these appendices, Jesus not only had the capability to heal people and cast out demons, he stilled a storm, walked on water, caused a fig tree to wither and managed to feed thousands of people when he started with enough food to only feed a handful of people.

Other Perspectives

As Theissen and Merz point out, there are obviously several different ways people could look at Jesus and the miracles attributed to him, which they put into six categories³¹:

A. The rationalist interpretation, in which the miraculous component is removed.

An example of this would be saying that Jesus was actually walking across logs floating on the water versus actually walking on the water it self. C.F. Bahrddt and H.E.G. Paulus brought forth this way of thinking.

B. Mythical interpretation, which is exactly as it sounds. From this point of view, miracles are to be interpreted as myths, conveying a certain idea, especially a Messianic self-consciousness. David Freidrich Strauss is the leading contender in this category saying “as soon as he was considered a

³⁰ MT 9:35, parallel with MK 6:6b, LK 8:1.

³¹ Theissen and Merz, 285-291.

prophet ... miraculous powers were attributed to him; and when they were attributed to him they came of course into operation”

- C. Interpretation of the miracles in form criticism and the history of religions is something that Rudolf Bultmann supports. The followers of this way of interpretation concur that the miracles attributed to Jesus were borrowed from Hellenism. Bultmann's example of this is Jesus turning water into wine at Cana was a transferred miracle from the Greek god, Dionysus.
- D. The redaction-critical relativization approach concedes that when Jesus calmed the waters, he was actually commanding his disciples to be silent and the waves just happened to stop at that precise moment. In other words, the miracles attributed to Jesus just happened by coincidence, not because Jesus had control over nature, etc. Rudolf Bultmann is an example of this way of interpretation.
- E. Placing Jesus in a typology of ancient miracle workers is the approach that Vermes chooses, in comparing Jesus with other miracles workers in existence at this time, such as Honi the circle drawer or Hanina Ben Dosa.
- F. Sociological aspects of the belief in miracle and of the emergence of miracle workers approach maintains that throughout history the belief in miracles rises and falls at varying times. Theissen believes that during Jesus' days, belief in miracles was high, therefore accepting Jesus as a miracle worker was a natural belief to have held at this time without question.

While most of these options seem well thought out and believable, I think the most acceptable interpretations outside actually believing that Jesus performed these miracles

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are the last two interpretations. Concrete examples of other miracle workers in existence during Jesus' time will be laid out in detail later, to lend more credibility for what Vermes and Theissen find to be most believable.

*Jesus as an Apocalyptic Prophet*³²

At this point, we must acknowledge the title "Son of Man." Jesus tends to refer to himself in the third person with this title, which Theissen and Merz assert, has two meanings. They note that 'son of man' could just be a way of saying 'the or a man,' or it could be the apocalyptic figure from Daniel 7:13, sent to judge the world. They believe that the first option does not have enough theological significance, while the second definition attempts to claim too much to be historically reasonable.³³ As you will see in the following sections, the Son of Man has authority to break the Sabbath and forgive sins, among other things.

Jesus is ambiguous about the true meaning of this title, and it is also unclear which of the "Son of Man" sayings are authentic. Some scholars do not believe that the Son of Man sayings are authentic. I think the most important thing to understand about this title is not necessarily its meaning, but that it is Jesus' preference to be known as the "Son of Man". Theissen and Merz illustrate this point by citing Mark 8:29 in which Jesus responds to Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah with a prophecy about the

³² A complete listing of the instances in which the phrases "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Heaven" can be found in appendix D.

³³ Theissen and merz, 542.

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Son of Man, and Mark 14:61 which depicts Jesus making a statement about the "Son of Man" in response to the Sanhedrin's question about Jesus' Messiahship.³⁴

Also central to the issue of Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet, are the kingdom sayings. Time and again, Jesus mentions the "kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of Heaven," however sometimes it sounds as if this kingdom is coming, other times Jesus says that it is already present. Sanders believes that the kingdom can now be, and was then, viewed as both present and something that is coming.

Q

The sayings gospel Q contains a few references to an apocalyptic kingdom of God either coming in the near future, or being already present. The following is a list of the explicit references Jesus makes to the kingdom of God.

Q30 we have Jesus commissioning the disciples and instructing them, "Say to the people of the town, 'The realm of God is at your door.'"³⁵

Q31 "Yet be sure of this: the realm of God is very near."³⁶

Q37 "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the reign of God has arrived!"³⁷

Q79 "Jesus was asked, 'When will the kingdom of God arrive?' He replied, 'You won't be able to see the kingdom of God when it comes... The kingdom of God is among you.'³⁸

Note that because this is a sayings Gospel, Q does not give much background information, if any. In order to place the quote into its complete context, one must look

³⁴ Ibid, 550.

³⁵ MT 10:11-12, LK 10:5-9.

³⁶ MT 10:40, 11:21-23; LK 10:10-16.

³⁷ MT 12:22-28, LK 11:14-20.

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at the parallel texts found in Matthew and Luke. In Q30 and Q31, Jesus is instructing the disciples what to say to the people with whom they are sharing the Gospel. Matthew's insight into Q30 leaves one with the impression of condemnation. Jesus instructed the disciples that if a town rejects them, they are to say, "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near."

Q37 is Jesus' response to the crowd's accusation that Jesus was working miracles by the power of the devil. Note that in this particular kingdom saying, Jesus basically tells the people that the kingdom is already present, versus the kingdom only being near, according to Q30. Q79 has no parallel with Matthew, but in Luke's Gospel it is the Pharisees that are questioning Jesus. Immediately after this section included in Q, Jesus turns to the disciples and tells them: "The days are coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man ... But first he must endure much suffering and be rejected by this generation".

Matthew

Jesus specifically mentions the phrase "kingdom of God" only four times in the Gospel of Matthew, while "kingdom of heaven" was mentioned thirty-one times. Also of note is that the phrase "kingdom of Heaven" is only found in this Gospel. The first mention of the kingdom of God in Matthew was just addressed with Q37. The other three instances of this phrase in Matthew come from parables in which Jesus compares the addressee with someone considered somewhat of an outcast of society. In Matthew 19:23-24, Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than

³⁸ LK 17:20-21, no parallel text with MT.

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for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” This is also the only instance in which “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” appear in successive verses.

The third instance of a kingdom of God saying in Matthew occurs in the parable of the two sons, 21:31 says “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you.” Jesus then goes on to say in verse 32, “For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”

The last instance of a kingdom of God saying in Matthew occurs in the parable of the wicked tenants. In verse 43 Jesus says, “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.”

In many of Matthew’s kingdom of heaven sayings, Jesus compares the kingdom to things such as a man who sowed good seed, a mustard seed, yeast mixed into dough, a treasure hidden in a field, a merchant looking for fine pearls, a full net let down into a lake, and the owner of a house.³⁹ These parables describe the kingdom. In the case of the net, the fisherman casts out all the bad fish, which is what will happen when the kingdom of God comes because the “angels will separate the wicked from the righteous.” In these instances, the kingdom is a future reality, coming near.

Jesus also tells the people in Matthew 18:3-4, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus again mentions the kingdom of heaven belonging to the children in Matthew 19:14, saying “Let

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the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”

Luke

In Luke’s Gospel, the “kingdom of heaven” is never mentioned, however the phrase “kingdom of God” is mentioned 31 times. As in Matthew’s sermon on the mount, Luke’s sermon on the plain says that the kingdom of God belongs to the blessed poor, as well as containing many of the same comparisons of the kingdom as Matthew. In Luke 10:9 and 11, Jesus warns that the kingdom of God is near, and in 9:27 Jesus says, “But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.” Luke 17:20-21 also depicts Jesus telling the Pharisees “The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed ... For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.” However, in Luke 22:16-18 during the last supper, Jesus tells the disciples that he will neither eat, nor “drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

Mark

Mark mentions the kingdom of God only fourteen times, all of which are mentioned in some form or another in either one or both of the other synoptic Gospels. As one can see from the aforementioned information, Jesus talks of the kingdom to come, and the kingdom that is. E.P. Sanders states, “The kingdom of God always exists *there* [heaven]; in the future it will exist *here*.”⁴⁰

³⁹ MT 13:24, 31, 44, 45, 47, 52; respectively.

⁴⁰ Sanders, 169.

Conclusion

Some of Jesus' ethical teachings (which will be discussed in the next section) do point towards a new kingdom coming in the near future. This view of his clearly made an impression on his disciples and followers, so much in fact that the Gospels were not even recorded in writing until decades after his death. This view is actually one of the main reasons that scholars put forth to explain the late authorship of the Gospels. If Jesus and the kingdom of God were to come back in the near future, there would be no need for a written Gospel. These people expected it to be made complete in their own lifetime. I think it is safe to say that Jesus truly thought of himself as an apocalyptic prophet. These passages also present Jesus as a prophet because he was telling them about what was to come in the future. Throughout the Gospels, the crowds refer to him as "the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee".⁴¹ While the crowd's declaration alone does not affirm that Jesus saw himself as a prophet, he does not deny it.

Also of note under the genre of Jesus as a prophet, is the passage when Jesus says, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house".⁴² This is in reference to Jesus' return to his hometown, and the people doubted him. In this instance, Jesus only cured a few sick people and left, shocked at their disbelief in him. In general, I think it is safe to say that part of Jesus' self-identity included that of an apocalyptic prophet.⁴³

⁴¹ MT 21:12

⁴² MT 13:57, MK 6:4, LK 4:24.

Jesus as a Teacher and Wisdom Sage

I found it rather difficult to draw the line between the categories of Jesus as a wisdom sage, a reformer and an apocalyptic prophet because many of Jesus' teachings greatly affect and reform the communities in which he preaches. Jesus shows amazing knowledge of the Biblical writings and uses his wisdom to interpret the laws for the people and thus challenges some of the norms, while his apocalyptic prophecies also call for the people to reform and repent because the Kingdom of God is near.

Gospel of Q

Clearly, the Gospel of Q favors an interpretation of Jesus as a teacher or wisdom sage because it consists mainly of the sayings and teachings of Jesus and John the Baptist. In the preface, Borg also mentions that some scholars divide Q into three sections, the largest being wisdom teachings, then conflict and judgment sayings, and the smallest category consisting of Jesus' teachings about himself.⁴⁴ Borg does not divide Q into these sections, yet these different categories are evident within the sayings. Q does not give much background information about the saying and the context, so some can be rather confusing. A few reasons for the exclusion of this and other seemingly important elements included in the other Gospels, are that either the writer of Q did not feel the need to include this information because other Gospels had documented it, or that the writer felt the focus should be on the teachings and lessons of Jesus, rather than who or what he was or was not. At any rate, these excerpts included in Q seem to show that

⁴³ Note that "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" are traditionally accepted to mean the same thing. It was just interesting to see that the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" is used exclusively in Matthew.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 15-16.

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Jesus was aware of what people thought of him, and give some insight into what he thought of himself.

Some scholars believe that Jesus' ethical demands are conditional for entering the prophetic kingdom.⁴⁵ The passage cited as proof in this case, would be the beatitudes found in Q sayings 9-13⁴⁶

“Fortunate are you who are poor, for yours is the realm of God.
Happy are you who are hungry now, you shall be satisfied.
Fortunate are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.
Fortunate are the gentle for they shall inherit the earth.
Happy are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.
Happy are the pure in heart, for they shall see the face of God.
Fortunate are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

The last three lines seem to be the clearest evidence for this train of thought, and through Jesus' ethical teachings, he ends up starting a reformation, which will be discussed in the next section in more detail.

Jesus' wisdom teachings consist mainly of ethics, and on how to live the way Jesus lived. Jesus tells the people to share their clothing and food with those who have none,⁴⁷ orders the tax collectors to stop extorting and charge only the official rate,⁴⁸ “Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who treat you badly,⁴⁹ to turn the other cheek,⁵⁰ treat others how they want to be treated,⁵¹ and the list goes on. Basically, the majority of the sayings included in the hypothetical gospel Q belong under this category, but for the sake of space and to avoid redundancy, I will not include every wisdom saying of Jesus located in this gospel.

⁴⁵ Theissen and Merz, 243.

⁴⁶ MT 5:3-12, LK 6:20b-23.

⁴⁷ Q2, MT 3:5-10, LK 3:7-11.

⁴⁸ Q3, LK 3:12-14.

⁴⁹ Q14, MT 5:44, 46; LK 6:27-28.

⁵⁰ Q15, MT 5:39b-42, LK 6:29-30.

⁵¹ Q16, MT 7:12, 5:46-47; LK 6:31-33, 35b.

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In Q33, Jesus says to his disciples "Fortunate are the eyes that see what you are seeing. Many prophets and kings wished to see what you now see and never saw it, longed to hear what you now hear and never heard it."⁵² Just before this, in Q32 Jesus is praying in front of a crowd, saying

"I thank you, Father, for hiding things from the wise and the clever and revealing them to the childlike. This is the way you want it. Everything has been put in my hand by my father. No one knows who the son is except the father, and who the father is except the son, and anyone to whom the son chooses to reveal him."⁵³

In these two passages, Jesus is alluding to how he sees himself. He talks about himself in the third person, but when he addresses God, he calls him "Father". He also notes in front of a crowd that they are seeing what the prophets have been talking about, and that no one can know who Jesus really is until he chooses to reveal himself.

The Gospel of Mark

In the Gospels Jesus is a spiritual guide, very knowledgeable of the scriptures as well as a political reformer, well aware of the laws. He teaches not only in parables, but uses the life situations his peers find themselves facing. In Mark 1:22, Jesus is teaching in Capernaum with the people saying, "They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes". In Mark 12:28-34⁵⁴ we have Jesus seen as a spiritual advisor with a scribe asking Jesus which is the greatest commandment, to which Jesus replies, citing Deuteronomy 6:4-5 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your

⁵² Borg, 67. Also found in MT 13:16-17 and LK 10:23-24.

⁵³ Ibid, 66. MT 11:25-27 and LK 10:21-22.

⁵⁴ MT 22:34-40, LK 10:25-28.

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soul, and with all your might.” A few verses later in Mark 12:41-44⁵⁵ we have Jesus watching people putting money into a treasury, with Jesus teaching a lesson on how the fiscal amount of money put in is not as important as the sacrifice made by the giver. The woman putting in her only two coins made a greater sacrifice than the ones putting in a larger sum of money.

The Gospel of Matthew

The Sermon on the Mount ranges from Matthew 5:1-7:29⁵⁶. This sermon contains sayings and answers to questions about morality. In Matthew 5:17⁵⁷ Jesus says “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.” Yet in the following lengthy section stretching from 5:21-48 Jesus raises expectations and “alters” the law by setting higher standards for what are and are not sinful actions. He uses the commands given by God through man found in the Old Testament and clarifies what they really entail in the effort to spur the people into becoming more pure. This coincides with Matthew 23:26⁵⁸ when Jesus is criticizing the Pharisees, saying “First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside may also become clean.” Later in Matthew 15:8-11, we have Jesus lecturing on hypocrisy, yet again saying,

“You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines... Listen and understand: it is not what goes into a mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.’”

One example of an ethical teaching from the Sermon on the Mount can be found in verses 27-28, when he says “You have heard that it was said ‘You shall not commit

⁵⁵ LK 21:1-4.

⁵⁶ Parallel to the Sermon on the Plain found in LK 6:17-49, although there are other references made in the Sermon on the Mount that can be found all over the Gospel of Luke.

⁵⁷ LK 16:16-17

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adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

One of the main ways Jesus imparts his teachings is through parables. When Jesus is questioned about his use of parables, he quotes Isaiah saying,

"You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears and understand with their heart and turn – and I would heal them ..." ⁵⁹

This passage sounds rather harsh because it appears as though Jesus does not want the people to understand him, therefore he does not have to heal them. However, throughout the Old Testament, God sent prophets and judges to help save the people from their sins. The people would only abide while there was someone there telling them what to do. When they learn things through parables, they actually have to think about the true meaning of the parable, versus blindly accepting the teachings.

The Gospel of Luke

Luke's Gospel contains information along the same lines as what has been previously brought to light, however the issue of hypocrisy should be addressed before reaching the section about Jesus as a religious and political reformer. While both parties held the law in high esteem, the Sadducees rejected all teachings found outside the law, which would seemingly make them more apt to argue with Jesus. Their relationship is illustrated in Luke 11:37-12:3:

"Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not the one who made the

⁵⁸ LK 11:39

⁵⁹ MK 4:12, MT 13:10-17, LK 8:9-10, Isaiah 6:9-10.

outside make the inside also? So give for alms those things that are within; and see everything will be clean for you ... Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered ... whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops."

As Jesus clearly states in this passage, he is teaching against hypocrisy.

Jesus as a Reformer

Q

As mentioned previously, Jesus' teachings provoked both political and spiritual reformations. However, Jesus' actions speak louder than his words when it comes to him being seen as a reformer. As Q is mainly a sayings gospel, there are no blatant examples outside of some of the specific teachings mentioned earlier.

Mark's Gospel

One of the most striking examples of Jesus as a reformer can be found in Jesus' cleansing the temple in Mark 11:15-19:

"Then they came to Jerusalem . And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, 'Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."⁶⁰

At this time, the temple was the center of life for both spiritual and not such holy reasons.

Jesus once again wanted a reformation and a call back to purity. Later in Mark 13:1-8⁶¹

Jesus warned of the destruction of the temple. Some historians believe these two

⁶⁰ MT 21:12-16, LK 19:45-46, JN 2:13-17.

⁶¹ MT 24:1-8, LK 21:5-11.

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incidents may have led to his arrest and crucifixion. Mark 2:13-17 depicts Jesus and his disciples eating with “tax collectors and sinners”. This is Jesus once again challenging the norms of that time because these people were not considered to be good company to keep. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked him why he was there, and Jesus said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come not to call the righteous, but the sinners.”⁶²

Matthew

As mentioned earlier in the teachings section, in Matthew 5:17-20 Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish the law, but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” Notice how in the following verses, Jesus expands upon the laws and teachings found in the Torah. Jesus charges them to take the laws to the next level. One example was mentioned earlier with Jesus’ ethical teachings, in regards to adultery. In that same section from Matthew 5:30 in the sermon on the mount, Jesus says, “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.”⁶³ This may not seem like much of a reformation, however people were becoming rather lax in regards to the law and Jesus wanted them to reform and cling more tightly to the law in order to maintain their purity. This was also addressed and illustrated in the last section in reference to the cup and needing to clean the inside as well as the outside for it to actually be pure.

⁶² MT 9:9-13, LK 5:27-32.

⁶³ MK 9:47

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Jesus goes on to challenge social norms by eating with sinners and tax collectors, and challenging purity laws by setting another standard. When the Pharisees question Jesus about eating with sinners in Matthew 9:10-13, Jesus simply replies, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come not to call the righteous but sinners."

Luke

Another instance of Jesus moving towards a reformation can be found in Luke 12:22-34 where he charges the people against materialism:

"Jesus said to his disciples, 'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'"⁶⁴

As mentioned and illustrated earlier, many of Jesus' teachings inadvertently call for reformations. Most of these instances were previously mentioned; therefore the most significant examples of Jesus as a political and religious reformer have been addressed in previous sections.

Messianic Self Consciousness

E.P. Sanders discusses the derivation of the term "Messiah" and places it into the context of Jesus' lifetime. He clarifies that the English term "Messiah" is a derivative of the Aramaic term "Mashiha", which in Greek is "Meshiah" or "Christos", which is where we get the English term "Christ". Today, "Christ" is synonymous with Jesus, which most people associate with Jesus being the spiritual savior. Originally the term "Mashiha"

⁶⁴ MT 6:19-34.

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meant “anointed”, and during this time period, only prophets, priests and kings were considered to be the anointed classes. Later, Christianity inferred a royal messianic self-consciousness from the attribution of this title to Jesus.

People later derived another meaning for the word Messiah. There are passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls that refer to two Messiahs: a son of David and a son of Aaron, who was the first high priest. One of the Scrolls refers to a great war, but neither one of the Messiahs have anything to do with it. Sanders contends that all we can conclude about the term “Messiah” is that it means “anointed”, namely the anointed of God.⁶⁵ It is not clear what Jesus thought he was anointed for.

The Gospel of Q

As previously mentioned, because Q is mainly a wisdom sayings Gospel, there are only a few instances where one might infer a Messianic self-consciousness. One of those can be found at the end of Q31 Jesus says “Those who reject me reject the one who sent me,”⁶⁶ and as stated in Q32 “Everything has been put in my hand by my father.” There are two other sayings in Q which could be interpreted as instances of Jesus alluding to Messianic self-consciousness. In Q47 Jesus states, “Everyone who acknowledges me in public will be celebrated by the angels,”⁶⁷ while Q82 reads, “Jesus said to his followers, ‘You have stayed close to me through all of my trials. You will eat and drink with me in the realm of God.’”⁶⁸

Does Q build a case for Jesus’ Messianic self-consciousness? The only passages in Q that might negate Jesus’ self-knowledge as a Messiah could be found in Q6-8.

⁶⁵ Sanders, 240-241, for all the information for this introductory section.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 61. MT 10:40, LK 10:16 and JN 13:20.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 81. MT 10:32 and LK 12:8.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 118. MT 19:28 and LK 22:28-30.

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These passages come from Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 which tell of Jesus spending 40 days being tempted by the devil. The devil tries to make Jesus prove that he is the Son of God by ordering him to test God by throwing himself off of a cliff. If Jesus is telling the truth, then God will save him. Jesus does not fall for the ruse, but instead responds by quoting scriptures from Deuteronomy, countering why he will not be forced into it.⁶⁹ As far as Jesus not explicitly declaring who he thought he was, Jesus explains himself in Q32, when he iterates that only to the ones who are chosen, will it be revealed who “the son”, Jesus, is. On the other hand, there are no overtly explicit instances of Jesus making a Messianic claim.

Mark's Gospel

Jesus tends to talk about himself in the third person in parables, as seen in Mark 2:18-20⁷⁰ in a lesson when questioned as to why his disciples were not fasting. Jesus' response was, “the wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.” It is important to recognize that this is before Jesus makes any of his passion predictions to his disciples, but it is clear that this is an allusion towards what is to come. Jesus first foretells his death and resurrection in Mark 8:31, the second time in 9:30-32, and the final time in 10:32-34.⁷¹

When he makes those predictions, he says things like “Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of the Father.” He tells them that when he is betrayed and

⁶⁹ Jesus' 40 days of fasting and temptation by the devil are also mentioned in MK 1:12-13, although it does not go into any depth.

⁷⁰ MT 9:14-17, LK 5:33-39.

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killed, he will rise again three days later. This is the closest Jesus comes to directly admitting his Messianic self consciousness until after his arrest when he is before the council being questioned in Mark 14:53-65. This will be addressed later in a parallel of all the Gospel accounts together.

Note also, that in the account mentioned earlier in Mark 2:1-12, about Jesus healing the paralyzed man lowered through the roof, that the people asked Jesus, "Who can forgive sins but God alone," to which Jesus replied, "Which is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."⁷² This statement is a rather assertive one for Jesus to have made, especially considering some of the passages which mentioned the exorcisms he performed when he ordered both the spirits and the human witnesses to be silent about his identity. An example can be found in Mark 5:1-20 with the Gerasene demoniac named "Legion", who calls out to Jesus, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"

Matthew's Gospel

In Matthew 16:24-27, Jesus says,

"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it... For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done"

This seems to be pretty explicit evidence that Jesus had a spiritual Messianic self-consciousness. Just before this in Matthew 16:13-20, when Jesus asks who people say he is and Peter declares Jesus to be the Messiah, Jesus, "sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah." A few verses later, starting in Matthew 17:1, we

⁷¹ Parallels: First prediction: MT 16:21-23, LK 9:22. Second Prediction: MT 17:22-23, LK 9:43b-45. Third prediction: MT 20:17-19, LK 18:31-34.

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have the transfiguration in which Jesus', "face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white ... suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'"

However, in 17:9 Jesus orders the disciples "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead".⁷³

Jesus continues more explicitly with this spiritual Messianic self-consciousness in Matthew 20:26-28, saying "... Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." Again in 24:5 he warns, "For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!'"⁷⁴ In Matthew 24:30-31 Jesus says, "The Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see 'the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven' with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call."⁷⁵ Finally, Matthew 25:31-46 states, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." Not only does this show Jesus professing that he will be sitting on a throne in heaven, surrounded by angels, but that Jesus has the power to separate and judge people, which was mentioned earlier as something which only God has the power and right to do.

⁷² MT 9:1-8, LK 5:17-26, JN 5:1-9a.

⁷³ MK 9:2-8, LK 9:28-36.

⁷⁴ In MT 7:15-20 Jesus warned of false prophets.

⁷⁵ MK 13:24-27, LK 21:25-28.

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Luke's Gospel

In Luke 13:32, Jesus alludes to his resurrection and a spiritual Messianic self-consciousness by saying "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work." We find an example of his royal Messianic self-consciousness in Luke 18:35-43. A blind man is told by passers-by that Jesus of Nazareth has just passed him,

"He shouted, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' ... Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.'"

With Jesus' response to the man, he acknowledges his lineage, pointing to what could be a royal Messianic self-consciousness.

In a notably more confusing passage found in Luke 20:41-44 we have (presumably) Jesus raising the question,

"How can they say that the Messiah is David's son? For David himself says in the book of Psalms, 'The Lord said to my Lord,
'Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.'"
David thus calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?"

It is hard to say what Jesus really intended to achieve with this question, but to me, the new question to be asking is as follows: Is Jesus alluding to a contradictory identity?

Luke's Gospel is the only Gospel containing the story of Jesus as a boy being inadvertently left behind at the temple in Jerusalem during Passover. When Joseph and Mary realize he is no longer with them and their entourage, they go back and find him at the temple. All Jesus says is "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"⁷⁶ We later find Jesus in Luke 19:9-10 saying to the rich tax collector

⁷⁶ LK 2:41-52

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Zacchaeus and a crowd, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost."

Finally, Luke 19:38-40 has Jesus entering into Jerusalem on a donkey borrowed by two disciples borrowed because "the Lord needs it," with the crowds praising God. "Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out!'" The Harper-Collins Study Bible acknowledges that on this day, "God was expected to appear there on the day of the Lord and become 'king over all the earth.'" Jesus' entry into the city was considered to be a royal entry.⁷⁷

The Question about David's Son and Jesus'

Royal Messianic Self-Consciousness

In the previous section, we lightly touched on the passage in Matthew 22:41-46 and Luke 20:41-44, with have a parallel of Mark 12:35-37a saying,

"While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he said, 'How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared,

'The Lord said to my Lord,
'Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet.'
David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?'"

Some people may find this passage difficult to understand. Jesus is the speaker, and it seems that is he talking about himself, yet refers to himself as "Messiah". Again, as mentioned earlier the term "Messiah" means "anointed". Jesus does not specify what the Messiah is anointed to do in this passage, but he is questioning the attribution of a Davidic royal messianic self-consciousness as applied to this Messiah/himself. I now want to take the opportunity to point out that in the genealogies found in both Matthew

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1:2-17 and Luke 3:23-38, Jesus' royal Davidic lineage does not come through to him from his mother Mary, but from Joseph. Therefore, Jesus does not technically have any royal blood for those who choose to believe in the miraculous conception. Might I also point out that this quotation comes from Psalm 110:1, which is traditionally attributed to King David, has not been proven historically to have been written by him. Therefore, David's confusion in calling "his son" "Lord" does not necessarily negate Jesus' royal messianic identity.

The new question is now, how should this affect the way one might view Jesus Messianic self-consciousness? Jesus does not seem to have let this lack of a Davidic royal bloodline affect his self-consciousness. However, for those who might have trouble attributing this royal aspect of Jesus' persona as a result of this interesting piece of information, let us remember this: Joseph still married Mary and raised Jesus as a son. Jesus was still a part of David's line by marriage, even if he did not have that royal blood flowing through his veins. Does this mean that his claim to the Davidic line was right? It depends on how technical one wants to be about needing King David's actual royal blood flowing through Jesus' veins for him to have a royal messianic self-consciousness. As far as the church is concerned, they either disregard these problematic passages or see it as a minor detail.

In Matthew 21:1-9, Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:28-40, and even John 12:12-19, we have Jesus making a triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Matthew's version says:

"Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately. This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,
"Tell the daughter of Zion,

⁷⁷ Harper-Collins, 1997.

Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey
and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large
crowd spread their cloaks on the road and others cut branches from the trees and
spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed
were shouting,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?'

The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'"

Not only did Jesus accept the identities attributed to him by the people, as Son of David
and the "one who comes in the name of the Lord", Jesus made a royal entry into
Jerusalem. When the people covered the road with their cloaks and branches, it signified
a royal procession.⁷⁸

The Passion Parallels

The most significant explicit evidence of Jesus' spiritual Messianic self-
consciousness can be found in the Passion narratives. In Mark's version with Jesus
before the council, the high priest Caiaphus asks Jesus, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of
the Blessed One?" Jesus responds simply with "I am; and 'you will see the Son of Man
seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'"⁷⁹
Conversely, in Mark 15:2 when Jesus is before the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate, Pilate
asks Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answers, "You say so". Matthew
presents Caiaphus posing the question similar to Mark's version, saying "I put you under
oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." Once again,

⁷⁸ Harper-Collins, 1943.

⁷⁹ MK 14:61-62; Quotations from Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13-14.

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Jesus responds with "You have said so," and the same quotation as mentioned above.⁸⁰

However, when Jesus is before Pilate, Pilate asks Jesus if he is the King of the Jews, to which Jesus again replies, "You say so". When Pilate lets the people choose between having Barabbas or Pilate released, instead of presenting Jesus as "King of the Jews," he presents Jesus as the "One who is called Messiah".⁸¹ Luke's portrayal of Pilate questioning Jesus is basically the same as what was portrayed in Matthew, however In Luke's version, Jesus is never brought before the council or Caiaphus.

Clearly, Mark's version presents the most compelling evidence towards a Spiritual Messianic self-consciousness, because it is only in Mark's version that Jesus responds with an undeniable affirmative answer. The different Gospel portrayals depict Jesus as having both a spiritual and Davidic messianic self-consciousness, but this could be challenged with Jesus' responses to the accusations in both Mark and Luke. Jesus responds with "You say so," instead of "Yes I am". This could be, and most definitely is interpreted by some to mean that Jesus did not really agree with the allegations. If one looks at these responses optimistically, Jesus does not refute the titles because they do not pose the strongest evidence towards Jesus' Messianic self-consciousness.

There is clear evidence that Jesus knew he was going to be crucified. In Matthew 26:6-13, a woman comes with an alabaster jar full of expensive ointment, which she pours on Jesus' head. Simon is angered over her wastefulness, but Jesus says, "She has performed a good service for me ... By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial."⁸² Jesus also predicts that he will be betrayed⁸³ and denied,⁸⁴ and

⁸⁰ MT 26:63-64.

⁸¹ MT 27:11-12, 17-23.

⁸² MK 14:3-9, LK 7:36-50, JN 12:1-8.

⁸³ MT 26:17-25, MK 14:17-21, LK 22:21-23; predictions come true in MT 26:47-56, MK 14:43-52,

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he speaks of soon being in His Father's kingdom. Before Jesus is crucified, he goes to pray saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want...My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."⁸⁵

This passage confirms that Jesus knew what was going to happen, and strengthens the claim of Jesus' Messianic self-consciousness. Jesus addresses God as "Father", which is not uncommon, but that is not what is so significant about this passage. Some people take this passage to mean that Jesus did not want to die, which I will not deny completely. Jesus was a man, he could still feel pain and he knew what was coming. As a man, I have no doubt in my mind that he was scared. Nevertheless, he prayed for God's will to prevail, even if it truly meant that he needed to be crucified to be humanity's Savior.

Another problematic section can be found in Matthew 27:46, in which Jesus cries out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Before I discuss this little quote, there is one more thing that needs to be noted. This line is parallel with Mark 15:34, however Luke does not record Jesus as saying this. Instead, Luke 23:46 has Jesus crying out, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Both of these utterances are quotations from the book of Psalms.⁸⁶ Could it be that Jesus is not doubting his Messianic self-consciousness, but quoting scriptures? Many people tend to read what Matthew and Mark have to say as meaning that Jesus may have doubted his Messianic self-consciousness. However, throughout all of his trials, Jesus never once appears to

LK 22:47-53, JN 18:1-12.

⁸⁴ MT 26:30-35, MK 14:26-31, LK 22:31-34, JN 13:26-38; predictions come true in MT 26:69-75, MK 14:66-72,

LK 22:56-62, JN 18:25-27.

⁸⁵ MT 26:36-46, MK 14:32-42, LK 22:39-46, JN 17:1-26.

⁸⁶ Psalm 22:1 and 31:5, respectively.

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have doubted until this point. It is clear from Jesus' teachings that he knows the scriptures well, so I do not think by any means that his crying out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," weakens his self-awareness.

My point here is this: Jesus knew what was going to happen, and still let himself be crucified. He obviously had a strong passion for God and great strength in his beliefs to have still gone through with it. It seems to me that this alone would suffice as evidence of a spiritual Messianic self-consciousness. Some would argue that there are other martyrs, and that one does not have to believe that they are the Son of God, the Spiritual Messiah to die for their beliefs, which I completely agree with. However Jesus seems to have such a higher knowledge and cause.

Theologians and Historians

In this next section, we will be looking at what a few historians and theologians have to say about Jesus and his self-consciousness.

Geza Vermes

Vermes was born in Mako, Hungary June 22nd, 1924. He later emigrated to England where he received a Catholic education. He is now Jewish, but at one point he was an ordained Catholic priest. He attended Budapest University, the University of Louvain and Oxford University. He received a doctorate in theology, and conducted extensive research on the Dead Sea Scrolls, which he did a dissertation on (He has been studying them and translating them since they were uncovered at Qumran in 1947). He merited several awards from various universities and has published numerous books and articles on his research and findings. I tend to hold him in high esteem. The following excerpt summarizes his objective:

"Most people, whether they admit it or not, approach the Gospels with preconceived ideas. Christians read them in light of their faith; Jews, primed with age-old suspicion; agnostics, ready to be scandalized; and professional New Testament experts, wearing the blinders of their trade. Yet it should not be beyond the capabilities of an educated man to sit down and with a mind empty of prejudice read the accounts of Mark, Matthew and Luke as though for the first time."⁸⁷

Vermes obviously wants people to be able to look at Jesus in the Gospels to find out who He really was, without any preconceived notions. Vermes wants hard evidence and facts to believe something, which does not really seem to be the basis of most religions. Most religions are about faith, but Vermes wants to get to the bottom of faith and how people twisted their views of Jesus into what he is for Christians today. Vermes says that Christians make no distinction between the Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History; however, most people have never thought of Jesus as those two separate things.

Vermes systematically goes through the synoptic Gospels, pointing out the similarities and contradictions, and laying out what he sees to be true from an historical point of view. He points out that Jesus was not the only healer and miracle worker of that time, and that Jesus was controversial because he spent his time with tax collectors and prostitutes, etc. He is skeptical of the resurrection and calls the Gospel of Mark the least doctrinally developed. He goes on to say that it is embarrassing that people actually base their religious beliefs on the Gospel of Mark alone, for its lack of evidence.⁸⁸ He points out that no one actually saw the resurrection. Instead, this claim is based on two women who found the empty tomb and were told by someone that the body was missing because Jesus was raised from the dead. Vermes is right to point out that Mark alone has weak evidence. He goes on to Matthew's version in which the Jews started a rumor that the

⁸⁷ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 19.

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disciples stole Jesus' body after bribing the guards and hid it in the night, ending that part with the line, "and this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day."⁸⁹

Vermes concludes that from the Gospels, two things are definitely true about the Passion narrative: Jesus' tomb was empty and the disciples would not have stolen the body, because they would have been too sad and depressed to think of such a thing. Vermes seems to think that many of the events recorded in the Gospels are added by the writer for the credibility of the Christ, versus actually being a reality. Vermes does, however, concede that Jesus could most definitely have been both a miracle worker and an exorcist. Vermes points out that there were other notable miracle workers in existence at that time, such as Honi the Circle-Drawer:

"Once they said to Honi the Circle-Drawer: 'Pray that it may rain' ... He prayed but it did not rain. Then what did he do? He drew a circle, and stood in it, and said before God: 'Lord of the world, thy children have turned to me because I am as a son of the house before thee. I swear by thy great name that I will not move hence until thou be merciful towards thy children.' It then began to drizzle. 'I have not asked for this,' he said, 'but for rain to fill cisterns, pits and rock cavities.' There came a cloud burst. 'I have not asked for this, but for a rain of grace, blessing and gift.' It then rained normally."⁹⁰

Vermes comes to the conclusion at the end that nothing in the Gospels can confirm, for a fact, that Jesus is the Messiah. However, Vermes clarifies that even though he compared Jesus to other miraculous men and miracle workers in existence at the same time, he is not saying that Jesus was just another miracle worker. He calls Jesus, "Second to none in profundity of insight and grandeur of character, he is in

⁸⁸ Ibid, 39.

⁸⁹ Matthew 28:15

⁹⁰ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 70.

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particular an unsurpassed master of the art of laying bare the inmost core of spiritual truth and of bringing every issue back to the essence of religion, the existential relationship of man and man, and man and God.”⁹¹ Vermes goes on, discussing how prophets in general are the voice of the (honest) poor, and defended the widows, orphans, etc. He points out that Jesus reached out beyond just standing up for these people and defending them; Jesus befriends them. Vermes wants people to be able to see Jesus for who he really was, not for all our own theological beliefs we project onto him. Jesus was a Jew; he did not see himself as the Messiah.

I’m intrigued by Vermes. He undertook something huge, and while I’m not sure he succeeded in keeping his own theology and beliefs separate, I appreciate his learned opinions. As a Jew who converted from Christianity, he has a higher level of knowledge about Jesus than most Jews, and views Jesus in the context of Charismatic Judaism. I appreciate his genuine and honest approach in the search for the historical Jesus. He makes some valid points, however I think Jesus was more than what Vermes allowed.

On whether Jesus would have thought of himself as the Messiah, Vermes says,

“Since the figure of the Messiah appears not to have been central to the teaching of Jesus, and since no record has survived of any hostile challenge concerning his Messianic status before his last days in Jerusalem; since, moreover, he deliberately withheld his approval of Peter’s confession and, in general, failed to declare himself to be the Christ, there is every reason to wonder if he really thought of himself as such.”⁹²

Vermes also cites the passion sections that were mentioned earlier, stating that because the answers in which Jesus only says “It is as you say” seem to be more of an answer that

⁹¹ Ibid, 224.

⁹² Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 149.

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would be given under pressure. However, Vermes admits that it would be incorrect to state that Jesus denied that he was the Messiah.⁹³

On Jesus as a teacher, Vermes says, "no objective and enlightened student of the Gospels can help but be struck by the incomparable superiority of Jesus ... In his ethical code, there is a sublimity, distinctiveness and originality in form unparalleled in any other Hebrew ethical code; neither is there any parallel to the remarkable art of his parables."

Vermes acknowledges that some scholars do not think it is possible to know Jesus historically, and concedes that there is not much that can be asserted with certainty about Jesus historically. However, Vermes says,

"The positive and constant testimony of the earliest Gospel tradition, considered against its natural background of first-century Galilean charismatic religion, leads not to a Jesus as unrecognizable within the framework of Judaism as by the standard of his own verifiable words and intentions, but to another figure: Jesus the just man, the zaddik (righteous man), Jesus the helper and healer, Jesus the teacher and leader, venerated by his intimates and less committed admirers alike as prophet, lord and Son of God."⁹⁴

E.P. Sanders

E.P. Sanders is a Christian historian, who, like Vermes, studied the Gospels and other historical writings in another attempt to find out who Jesus was. Sanders studies Judaism and Christianity in the Greco-Roman world, and has conducted extensive research in these areas. Sanders has published several books in his area of specialty and has been a professor at Duke, Trinity College, Dublin and Cambridge University.⁹⁵

⁹³ Ibid, 147-149.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 225. Note that Vermes states that the Bible mentions three types of "sons of God": heavenly or angelic beings, Israelites or the people of Israel, kings of Israel. (194) Vermes seems to negate the first definition, since Jesus never explicitly accepted the title Messiah, or Son of God.

⁹⁵ Sanders, E.P. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. (London, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1993), second page.

Sanders makes it known from the beginning that he will be looking at the evidence aside from his own Christian theologies, in the effort to see the best possible portrait of Jesus. In his introduction, Sanders states that he believes there are continuities between what the disciples thought about Jesus, how Jesus viewed himself, and how we see Jesus today while also noting that there are obvious dissimilarities.⁹⁶ The sources we have for understanding Jesus himself are very limited in the fact that we have no Gospel testament written by his own hand. Sanders says that the sources we have are, "from the point of view of the historian, tainted by the fact that they were written by people who intended to glorify their hero," however this is true of most books.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, Sanders believes that the resources for understanding Jesus are far better than those for knowing Alexander the Great. People who had known Jesus could still have been alive when the Gospels were written.

Sanders maintains that there is enough evidence in the Gospels to have an idea of how Jesus saw himself because we know some of the things he did, some of the lessons he taught and some of the reactions people had towards him. Sanders also makes it known that he will be more critical than he would be usually and will point out evidence to things contrary to his own beliefs. Sanders systematically goes through the evidence for some of the titles most often attributed to Jesus, and makes his own claims about what can be reasonably concluded to be true about Jesus and how he saw himself.

Sanders contends that Jesus' identity is more rooted in that of an exorcist and healer rather than as a teacher. Jesus' miracles are what led to his fame, amongst and above others of his time. He does not believe that Jesus could be classified as a magician

⁹⁶ Sanders, 2.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 3.

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and says it is a “speculative possibility” that Jesus healed by their means, “including spitting and other imitative physical behavior,” but believes that Jesus generally healed by speech and touch.⁹⁸

Sanders says that Jesus

“regarded himself as having full authority to speak and act on behalf of God ... From the point of view of those who were not persuaded, he was arrogant and attributed himself to a degree of authority that was most inappropriate. From the view of his followers and sympathizers he offered an immediate and direct route to God’s love and mercy, establishing a relationship that would culminate when the kingdom finally came. Jesus was a charismatic and autonomous prophet; that is his authority was not mediated by any human organization, not even by scripture.”⁹⁹

Sanders supports this claim by citing Jesus’ “follow me” passages, in which he does not ask his disciples to study God’s word with him, he asks them to give up everything they have to just follow him because he is “God’s agent”.¹⁰⁰ The second aspect of Jesus’ self assertion, according to Sanders, is an immediate, unmediated relationship to God. Sanders cites Vermes in stating that Jesus was not the only one who felt this great connection with God, but Sanders says you can be certain that Jesus considered himself to have been chosen or anointed to speak for God.

Sanders also believes that although most people use titles to better understand concepts, they are overrated in the attempt to realize Jesus’ self-consciousness because titles do not have standard definition. As discussed in the section about Jesus as the Messiah, Sanders chooses to operate with the definition “anointed”, since we have no way of knowing what other specific definition this term might have carried. Sanders does not think that Jesus used the term “Messiah” to describe himself, either to avoid

⁹⁸ Sanders, 154.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 238-239, for this entire paragraph.

¹⁰⁰ MT 19:27-29, 8:19, 8:21f, 16:24-28, 16:34-38, 19:19-22.

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trouble or because he did not fully agree with that attributed title. Instead, Jesus chose to speak of himself as the "Son of Man." In reference to Jesus and the appellation "Son of Man", he asserts that Jesus used it, sometimes of himself, and he expected the Son of Man to come from heaven, but it is uncertain that Jesus viewed himself as the future Son of Man.¹⁰¹ Sanders also poses an alternate reason for Jesus' choice against being known as the Messiah: "Jesus' actual claim might have been in fact, higher: not only spokesman for, but viceroy of, God; and not just in a political kingdom, but in the kingdom of God."¹⁰² He cites the temptation in Matthew 4:1-11 and Jesus rebuking Peter in Mark 8:33 for having his mind on more worldly things as evidence to this claim.

In his address of the royal entry into Jerusalem, Sanders maintains that there is not enough evidence to know what wither the crowd or Jesus thought about it, however, because Jesus chose that type of entry, he did not completely deny the title "king."¹⁰³ In regards to the appellation "Son of God" Sanders asserts that early Christians would not associate this title with Jesus' conception, and they did not conceptualize Jesus as half human, half God. He says that we can only assume that "Son of God" was a high designation.¹⁰⁴

In essence, Sanders rejects titles because they cannot fully communicate everything that Jesus identified himself as. He states,

"Jesus thought that the twelve disciples represented the twelve tribes of Israel, but also that they would judge them. Jesus was clearly above the disciples; a person who is above the judges of Israel is very high indeed. We also know that he considered his mission as being of absolute importance, and he thought that hoe people responded to his message was more important than other important duties. He thought that God was about to bring in his kingdom, and that he, Jesus, was

¹⁰¹ Sanders, 248.

¹⁰² Sanders 242.

¹⁰³ Sanders, 240-241.

¹⁰⁴ Sanders, 244.

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God's last emissary. He thought therefore that he was in some sense 'king'. He rode into Jerusalem on an ass, and he was executed for claiming to be 'King of the Jews' ... God was king, but Jesus represented him and would represent him in the coming kingdom."¹⁰⁵

Sanders' preferred title for Jesus, if he had to place one would be "viceroy".

John Dominick Crossan

John Dominick Crossan was a co-chair for the Jesus Seminar, begun by a man named Robert Funk in the late 1980's. For more than five years, the scholars he invited met a couple of times a year, to compose an inventory of material regarded as originally from Jesus. They discussed and voted on the evidence presented with four color-coded outcomes. Red text indicated that Jesus definitely said it, pink meant Jesus said something close to that, grey meant that Jesus did not say it, but it contained ideas congruent to his and black meant that it was something added later or from a different tradition.¹⁰⁶ Crossan points out that if you read the Gospels straight through, they seem to conform, but if you read them in a parallel, there are distinct differences that can only been seen through that approach.¹⁰⁷ On the search for the historical Jesus, Crossan says,

"There were always historians who said it could not be done because of historical problems. There were always theologians who said it should not be done because of theological objections. And there were always scholars who said the former when they meant the latter."¹⁰⁸

There are two ways to address this problem, as Crossan points out. One solution is to eliminate all the Gospels except for one; the other is to combine all the Gospels into one. He points out that people use both of these solutions today, his example being that

¹⁰⁵ Sanders 248.

¹⁰⁶ Crossan, John Dominic. *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 424-425.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, xxx.

people tend to cite only one Gospel when talking about a passage that is seen in parallels with others.¹⁰⁹ In his introduction to *The Historical Jesus*, Crossan lays out the criteria for determining which sayings are most likely to be authentically and historically said by Jesus. His methodology has three levels which he applies to each saying: anthropological, historical, and literary. Crossan's criteria states that each merits equal consideration when analyzing the Gospels, and if one is unsupported, it lessens its historical credibility.¹¹⁰

Crossan made several interesting observations of the Gospels, and what people should be aware of when searching for the historical Jesus:

- ~ "First, Gospels are found not only inside but also outside the New Testament itself.
- ~ Second, the four intracanonical ones represent neither a total collection nor a random sampling of all those available but were deliberately selected by a process in which others were rejected for reasons not only of content, but even of form.
- ~ Third, retention, development, and creation of Jesus materials are found alike within both intracanonical and extracanonical sources.
- ~ Fourth, differences and discrepancies between accounts and versions are not due primarily to vagaries of memory or divergences in emphasis but to quite deliberate theological interpretations of Jesus.

¹⁰⁸ Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, xxvii.

¹⁰⁹ Crossan, John Dominick, *Historical Jesus*, xxx.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, xxvii – xxix.

~ Finally ... the continuing presence of the risen Jesus and the abiding experience of the Spirit gave the transmitters of the Jesus tradition a creative freedom we would never have dared postulate were it not forced upon us by the evidence."¹¹¹

Crossan also notes that the Gospel writers freely add and exclude materials, always maintaining support for their own theological presuppositions. He refers to the Gospels as "Good Newses," saying that they are, in fact, good for whomever they are written to. "News" is written in the plural form because the accounts are plural, and although they overlap at points, they each have their own agenda and view of Jesus.¹¹²

Clearly, Crossan finds the New Testament Gospels to be biased and incomplete.

Crossan refers to Christianity as "Jesus/Christ/ianity" because he sees a compromise between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, with each of the New Testament Gospels focusing on a preferred aspect of the historical Jesus.¹¹³ Crossan also believes that just as much emphasis that is placed on the New Testament Gospels can and should be placed on the non-canonical gospels. Crossan says,

"I do not accept the argument that Christian faith tells us what we need to know about the historical Jesus. Christian faith tells us how the historical Jesus (fact) is the manifestation of God for us here and now (interpretation). You cannot believe in a fact, only in an interpretation. And no amount of faith can turn an interpretation into a fact."¹¹⁴

On the other hand, Crossan does not deny the Gospels of any significance. They are "Good Newses", and are completely true as Gospels, however as history they do not hold the same significance. One example that Crossan puts forth is the difference between

¹¹¹ See note above.

¹¹² See previous note.

¹¹³ Crossan, John Dominick, *Historical Jesus*, 423.

¹¹⁴ Crossan, John Dominick. *Who Killed Jesus*. (San Francisco, HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.), 217.

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Mark 14:35-36, 47 and John 18:10-11 in reference to the Cup, as discussed earlier.¹¹⁵ In Mark's version, Jesus prays for the cup to pass him, however, only if it is God's will. In John's version, Jesus orders Peter to put his sword down, saying, "Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?" These two versions clearly contradict each other, and are therefore considered to be historically unacceptable. However, as their own separate Gospels, "Good Newses", they are undeniably true.

Crossan makes it known that he is interpreting Jesus against "inclusive" Judaism, meaning "a Judaism seeking to adapt its ancestral customs as liberally as possible with maximal association, combination or collaboration with Hellenism on the ideological level."¹¹⁶ In this context, Crossan views Jesus to be no more than a Jewish cynic peasant, stating that eating and healing are central to his mission. He cites the fellowship of eating and the fact that those lacking food would be drawn to this type of outreach for the success of Jesus' ministry. The fact that Jesus was ministering to the outcasts of society said much about the kind of man he was, regardless of what sort of post-Easter appellations people might apply to Jesus.

Crossan has been ridiculed by many historians and theologians for his unnecessary "assault" on Jesus and Christianity. In the end, Crossan defends his view of Jesus by stating, "If you cannot believe in something produced by reconstruction, you may have nothing left to believe in."¹¹⁷ He maintains that the Gospels themselves are reconstructions, which is not untrue. Crossan believes that in order to see Jesus for who he truly was and to begin to understand his self-consciousness, one needs to look at all

¹¹⁵ Crossan, John Dominick. *Why Christians Must Search For the Historical Jesus*, Biblical Archaeology Society, 12 (1996) p 34-39, 42-45.

¹¹⁶ Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 418.

¹¹⁷ 427.

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the available resources in order to avoid seeing Jesus the way one certain group perceives him to be.

Analysis

The Gospels are derived from oral traditions passed down for decades until they were finally recorded in written form, and not necessarily by anyone who personally knew Jesus. This in itself causes much doubt in people, myself included. However, if one does not attempt to prove the historicity of the Gospels, and instead chooses to see them as the best insight into Jesus' self-consciousness, there is much to be found. Jesus was a teacher, a reformer, an apocalyptic prophet, and had a Messianic self-consciousness. It is illustrated through Jesus' words, actions and the reactions he elicits both from his followers, his opponents and the everyday people he came into contact with. It is clear that Jesus is aware of his surroundings and the responses he merits. When Jesus calls the disciples, they leave everything they have to follow him without question, and he makes it a point to consistently warn them about false prophets without regard to the affect this might have on others attitudes towards himself.

There are enough similarities between the Gospels for one to surmise what Jesus might have thought about himself, however, as has been pointed out by several historians, there are also discrepancies. One that is obvious by looking at the appendices in the back, is that the Gospel writers do not organize their information in the same order, and that some have more detail than others. To me, both of these arguments seem irrelevant. The writers of the Gospels are writing in different areas, in different situations, a Gospel

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catered to different people with differing views of what is important. The fact that they do not have the same order is the least of my worries. The fact that they could no longer remember the exact order in which things happened, does not lessen their credibility in my mind. All the writers clearly conveyed their main points, and it is up to us to decide for ourselves what the most important things are to be taken away from the Gospels.

I assert that anyone studying religion is vulnerable to unintentionally projecting preconceived theological biases onto whatever they may be studying. As a Christian, of course I want to believe that Jesus was the Savior, knew what was going to happen and did it anyway because he loves me. Even if I try to place this thought aside while researching, it is always in the back of my mind. We have other theologians, such as Geza Vermes, who made certain that he was going to study Jesus historically, aside from his own Jewish religious beliefs. Both he and I came to the same basic conclusion that we had before we entered the search, but it does not mean that we did not try. John Dominick Crossan is a Roman Catholic, which seemed rather surprising to me at first because he shredded the Gospels and their picture of Jesus until the majority of the sayings attributed to him in the Gospels were "proven" untrue. To him, Jesus was an uneducated peasant.

Anyone and everyone can put forth the effort to conduct a study into the self-consciousness of Jesus, and many have. Not everyone agrees, but that is their own prerogative. The warnings about false prophets and teachers stand out in my mind, not that these historians and theologians are by any means attempting to lead others astray. The point here is that people need to open their eyes and their minds, to study for

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themselves, know what they believe, and why they believe it. It is a dangerous thing to blindly follow.

I understand it is the job of a historian to analyze things down to nothing, but I do not think it renders them incapable of coming to a positive conclusion in agreement with some of the basic Christian assumptions about Jesus. Anyone is capable of analyzing the historical Jesus as all of the historians and theologians out there. It is a matter of how far one is willing to go or how much they are willing to give to really know who Jesus was. On the other hand, this question I have addressed is obviously not a new problem. The probe into the historical Jesus has been going on for hundreds of years, and we have yet to come to a conclusion. As hard as we strive, I do not think there will ever be a consensus on what Jesus' self-consciousness was. Nonetheless, I think it is an important thing for all Christians to look into. There are plenty of theologians and historians that have studied this question, whom many would claim have no stake in the answer. I now raise this question: why would this question be important if people did not have such strong beliefs, either way, about this question? Is it another quest to find the "true" religion, if there is such a thing? Crossan himself concluded that there is no difference between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. They are one and the same.

Appendix A – Miracles, healings and exorcisms in the Gospel of Mark¹¹⁸

These appendices are here in order to present the miracles, healings and exorcisms found in the Gospels that were not evidenced in the section about Jesus as a miracle worker and exorcist. Jesus performs so many of these works, that to talk about every single one separately would be redundant. However, because there are so many present in the Gospels, it is important to acknowledge the vast number and range of the works he performed.

Mark 1:21-28	Man with an unclean Spirit
1:29-34	Jesus heals many at Simon's house
1:40-45	Cleansing of a leper
2:1-12	healing of a paralytic
3:1-6	Healing of a man with a withered hand
5:1-20	Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac
5:21-43	Raising of the "sleeping" girl
6:30-44	Feeding the five thousand
6:45-52	Walking on water
6:53-56	Healing of the sick in Gennesaret
7:24-30	Syrophoenician woman's daughter healed by faith
7:31-37	Healing of a deaf man
8:1-10	Feeding the four thousand
8:22-26	Curing of a blind man
9:14-29	Exorcism of a boy
10:46-52	Healing of blind Bartimaeus

¹¹⁸ Derived from the titles as listed in the Harper-Collins Study Bible

Appendix B - Miracles in the Gospel of Matthew¹¹⁹

Matthew

4:23-25	Curing of many with various afflictions
8:1-4	Cleansing of a leper
8:5-13	Jesus heals a centurion's servant
8:14-17	Jesus heals many at Peter's house
8:23-27	Jesus stills a storm
8:28-34	Jesus heals the Gadarene Demoniacs
9:1-8	Jesus heals a paralytic
9:18-26	A Girl restored to life and a woman healed
9:27-31	Jesus heals two blind men
9:32-34	Jesus heals a mute
12:9-14	Jesus heals a man with a withered hand
14:13-21	Jesus feeds five thousand
14:22-33	Jesus walks on water
14:34-36	Jesus heals the sick in Gennesaret
15:21-28	Healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter by faith
15:29-31	Jesus cures many people
15:32-39	Jesus feeds four thousand
17:14-20	Jesus cures a boy with a demon
20:29-34	Jesus heals two blind men
21:18-22	Jesus curses the fig tree

¹¹⁹ Derived from the titles as listed in the Harper-Collins Study Bible

Appendix C – Miracles performed by Jesus as seen in the Gospel of Luke¹²⁰

Luke

4:38-44	Healings at Capernaum
5:12-16	Jesus cleanses a leper
5:17-26	Jesus heals a paralytic
7:1-10	Jesus heals a centurion's servant
7:11-17	Jesus raises a widow's son at Nain
8:22-25	Jesus calms a storm
8:26-39	Jesus heals a Gerasene demoniac
8:40-56	A girl restored to life and a woman healed
9:10-17	Jesus feeds five thousand
9:37-43	Jesus heals a boy with a demon
13:10-17	Jesus heals a crippled woman
14:1-6	Jesus heals a man with dropsy
17:11-19	Jesus cleanses ten lepers
18:35-43	Jesus heals a blind man

¹²⁰ Derived from the titles as listed in the Harper-Collins Study Bible

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Appendix D – Kingdom Sayings

Kingdom of God Sayings

MT 12:28
MT 19:24
MT 21:31
MT 21:43
MK 1:15
MK 4:11
MK 4:26
MK 4:30
MK 9:1
MK 9:47
MK 10:14
MK 10:15
MK 10:23
MK 10:24
MK 10:25
MK 12:34
MK 14:25
MK 15:43
LK 4:43
LK 6:20
LK 7:28
LK 8:1
LK 8:10
LK 9:2
LK 9:11
LK 9:27
LK 9:60
LK 9:62
LK 10:9
LK 10:11
LK 11:20
LK 13:18
LK 13:20
LK 13:28
LK 13:29
LK 14:15
LK 16:16
LK 17:20
LK 17:21
LK 18:16
LK 18:17
LK 18:24

LK 18:25
LK 18:29
LK 19:11
LK 21:31
LK 22:16
LK 22:18
LK 23:51

Kingdom of Heaven Sayings

MT 3:2
MT 4:17
MT 5:3
MT 5:10
MT 5:19
MT 5:20
MT 7:21
MT 8:11
MT 10:7
MT 11:11
MT 11:12
MT 13:11
MT 13:24
MT 13:31
MT 13:33
MT 13:44
MT 13:45
MT 13:47
MT 13:52
MT 16:19
MT 18:1
MT 18:3
MT 18:4
MT 18:23
MT 19:12
MT 19:14
MT 19:23
MT 20:1
MT 22:2
MT 23:13
MT 25:1

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