

The Personhood of God, pt 6 – The Person of Christ (cont. - the birth narratives)

Exegetical Review:

- Fundamentalist position –
 - Gospels are only literal and penned by the Holy Spirit
 - *Textual criticism has no place in God's word*
 - This creates exegetical difficulties (ex. Revelation, Genesis 1-3, numerology, etc.)
 - Was Jesus teaching on a mountain or plain? Was the temple cleansing at the start of Jesus' ministry, the end, or both? Was Jesus crucified after Passover meal (on Passover day) or on before the Passover meal on the Day of Preparation?
- Liberal position –
 - Gospel differences are evidence of historical inaccuracy
 - *Textual criticism negates God's word (literary, form, source)*
 - Presupposes the presence of miracles and differing theologies must be inaccurate and contradictory
 - There is a theology to each gospel that is being spoken of allegorically, or metaphorically to make a point (ex. virgin birth = a way of describing this man as divine, from another world; resurrection = a way of describing that they were still encountering Jesus from beyond the grave)
- Evangelical position –
 - Gospels are truth, inspired by Holy Spirit, penned by human authors
 - *Textual criticism illuminates God's word.*
 - Complimentary positions of each gospel (not contradictory positions).
 - Describe the sky - people see two different perspectives in a common picture. Both are still true.
 - There are different genres of writing in Scripture, and we must evaluate and interpret based on those different forms (chiasms, poetry, apocalyptic)
 - Bible is infallible in message it is trying to communicate (ex. - Job 38:13=its not a science passage)
 - How does each gospel show something of the person of Christ. What is the theology of the God-Man outlined in each? How does this inform us today?

Matthew - what is being conveyed?

1. Genealogies - fulfill Davidic line (these are not exhaustive and are grouped in 3 sections of 14 to show succession from David, not to chronicle detailed historical succession.)
 - a. In Hebrew, the three letters that make David's name have numerical value that adds up to 14 (Jewish reader would have recognized and understood this theological implication)
 - b. Pivotal turning points in Israel are the markers of these three genealogical sections (Abraham to David, David to the fall of the monarchy, the fall to the return of the Davidic monarchy with Christ)
 - c. Note term Christ is used (not Jesus' last name, but the messiah to return the kingdom)
2. Conflict with Herod (Herod is king)
 - a. Magi - court advisors (like Joseph & Daniel - reading signs of times). Fulfillment of Psalm 72:10, Is 60:6 - Gentiles bring gifts to Israel's King
 - b. Worship - Jesus is King, not Herod

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- c. Son of Man used (whereas John more commonly uses Son of God to stress divinity, not line of Davidic kingship)
- d. BUT...Mathew still acknowledges Jesus' divinity - "God with us" (God is King, Jesus is God, Jesus is King)
3. OT fulfillments - line of David, King, Star (possible reference to Num 24:17), Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), Flight to Egypt/New Moses (Hos 11:1, Jer 31:15)
 - a. Nazareth - not a direct OT quote, but introduced differently as what prophets in general said. Nazarenes were despised (John 1:46, 7:42, 52), and this was prophesied.
 - b. Also note Is 11:1 refers to Messiah as branch (Hebrew = netzer) of Jesse (play on root of Nazarene).

Luke - what is being conveyed?

1. Genealogies - Messiah for all people (great joy for all people-2:10, peace on earth-2:14)
 - a. Genealogy to Adam - father of all mankind (inclusive focus in Luke 3:38)
 - b. Gentile historical time markers - Caesar Augustus, Quirinius, Theophilus
2. Role of poor & marginalized
 - a. Shepherds - despised (bandit reputations)
 - b. Women
3. Role of Holy Spirit – Jesus is completely empowered but the Spirit!

John - what is being conveyed?

1. Genealogy – goes back to God (Jesus' divinity – John 1)
 - a. Word - exact form of God from beginning (see above lectures)
 - b. Son/Lamb of God
2. Light vs. darkness
3. Authentic life - eternal life is life in God. Qualitative, not only quantitative. Actually, the reality of God is beyond time, som qualitative might be more accurate
 - a. Creation - John 1 as new creation (mirrors Genesis)
 - b. Jesus as life giver
4. Spirit & water parallels
 - a. water & life
 - b. Spirit and new life

Where's Mark's?

1. Mark is not concerned with anything but the *immediacy* of Jesus' ministry.
2. Considered by most scholars the first written gospel, the imperative nature of the Good News, as the apostles encountered Jesus, is now of main concern to an audience being persecuted and trying to communicate the death of their leader
3. Messianic Secret - dominate in Mark, Jesus hides the nature of His true identity until the time for its disclosure has come (which propels backlash against Him & leads to cross)

When was Jesus born?

- Luke - Quirinus as governor of Syria performed a very unpopular census taken in 6 A.D.
 - Census was normally done every 14 years
 - Quirinius was probably only in office as early as 7 B.C. conservatively

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- Scholars have postulated that a smaller census could have been taken as a preliminary to the massive census in 6 A.D., but unknown
- Matthew - account takes place "after the birth of Jesus"
 - Jesus is in house now, not stable
 - Children killed are 2 years old or under (hoping to kill Jesus)
 - Herod died in 4 B.C., so Jesus could have been born as early as 6 B.C.

Other data -

- Pontius Pilate - ruled from 26-36 AD. Based on Jewish lunar calendar, and other dating tools, April 30 A.D and April 33 A.D. are the most common suggestions for Jesus' death
- Jesus started ministry after baptism at "around 30 yrs old" (which is when a rabbi could start in Judaism at the time)
- Ministry is thought to be about 3 years long based on numbered feasts Jesus attends (but this is inconclusive, and assumes all were reported in gospels)

It may be best, then, to assume that Jesus was born sometime around 5 B.C., at the start of Quirinius' governorship, 1) when an initial census was probably taken in conjunction with his newly filled office, 2) Herod was ruled and Jesus would have been a child under two but not newborn, 3) Jesus would have been 34 at age of death in 30 A.D. which would have put his baptism 3-4 years earlier at around 30 as Luke reports

Why is any of this important?

- Historicity of the gospels. They go out of their way to allow for dates, events, etc.
 - Uniqueness of the gospels in this area (The writers clearly want it viewed as historical, & were willing to die, be tortured, risk family, etc. for it – Luke 1:1-5)
 - Christianity is historical or it falls. (1 Cor 15:12-19)
- Uniqueness of gospel accounts were carefully maintained, even where disagreement “appears” to surface
 - This struck Josh McDowell as quite different than most ancient religious docs
- So what are the gospels trying to preserve?

Review:

- 1) Name 3 central themes to Matthew's birth narratives, as they portray the way Matthew sees the theanthropic reality of Christ. Give a Scriptural reference for each.
 - OT prophetic fulfillment, Kingship/Davidic line (man), God w/us (God)
- 2) Name 3 central themes to Luke's birth narratives, as they portray the way Luke sees the theanthropic reality of Christ. Give a Scriptural reference for each.
 - Role of Holy Spirit (birth, life, ministry of Christ), role of marginalized (women, poor), Messiah for all (genealogies to Adam, gentile references)
- 3) Name 3 central themes to John's incarnation narrative, as they portray the way he sees the theanthropic reality of Christ. Give a Scriptural reference for each.
 - Divinity (Word, Son, Lamb spotless), Life (qualitative life, eternal, new creation), Spirit & water
- 4) What is at the heart of Mark's gospel that explains why there is no birth narrative? (Hint: He goes right into Jesus' ministry and teaching for a reason)
 - Immediacy of the gospel in a persecuted early church (thought to be 1st gospel)
- 5) What is a realistic birth year for Jesus?
 - 5 B.C.