

## APPENDIX M

### The Equivalence of the Titles of Jesus

The parallel accounts of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin is a place where it becomes quite evident that all the major titles assigned to Jesus are synonymous and virtually interchangeable. I have listed the accounts below, along with some notations. By comparing the accounts, it should become evident that all the parties involved used the titles with essentially the same signification:

#### **Mark 14:60-64 // Matt 26:63-66 // Luke 22:66-71**

##### ***Mark***

Mark 14:60 The high priest stood up *and came* forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?"

Mark 14:61 But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?"

Mark 14:62 And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

Mark 14:63 Tearing his clothes, the high priest \*said, "What further need do we have of witnesses?"

Mark 14:64 "You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

Note:

- Christ is put in apposition to Son of the Blessed One (presumably, = Son of God) by the high priest
- Jesus answers the high priest in a way that implies that he does indeed believe himself to be the Son of Man and the high priest considers that claim to be blasphemous
- The question is whether he is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One. Jesus' answer is I am; I am the Son of Man. Everyone concerned would appear to accept Jesus answer as a "yes"— he is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One.

##### ***Matthew***

Matt. 26:63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God."

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Matt. 26:64 Jesus \*said to him, "You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."

Matt. 26:65 ¶ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy;

Matt. 26:66 what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!"

Note:

- Christ is put in apposition to Son of the living God (presumably, Son of God) by high priest
- Jesus, it would appear, answers "Yes, I am the Christ, the Son of the living God" and then quotes the Daniel passage, calling himself the Son of Man, and the high priest considers the claim blasphemy
- There doesn't seem to be any distinction being made between claiming to be the Christ, the Son of the living God and the Son of Man. They seem to be being considered synonymous by everyone concerned.

## **Luke**

Luke 22:66 ¶ When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council *chamber*, saying,

Luke 22:67 "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe;

Luke 22:68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer.

Luke 22:69 "But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD."

Luke 22:70 And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am."

Luke 22:71 Then they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth."

Note:

- High Priest asks Jesus point blank if he is the Christ and Jesus evades answering the question directly. But he answers it indirectly, identifying himself as the Son of Man who will be seated at the right hand of God (presumably a prerogative of the Christ).
- They ask him point blank if he is the Son of God and he answers "Yes" and they consider it blasphemous.

## **Synthesis of all three accounts**

The council asks Jesus if he, in fact, claims to be the Christ, the Son of God. Remarking that he knows they won't believe him if he says he is and that he knows they won't

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enter into serious discussion of his claim, he nevertheless answers that, as a matter of fact, he is indeed the Christ; he is the one predicted in Daniel. (And to say so is tantamount to saying that he is, in fact, the Messiah). In order to be clear, they ask him to affirm distinctly that he is claiming to be the "Son of God," and he does affirm it, saying point blank, "Yes, I am." At that point they conclude that they now have heard blasphemous claims by Jesus with their own ears and have no further need of witnesses in order to condemn him for blasphemy.

Question asked Jesus is whether he is the Anointed One=the Son of God Jesus answers that he is the Anointed One, the one predicted by Daniel = the Son of God Therefore, The Anointed One = Son of God = Son of Man (Jesus' self-identification in making his claim)
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Question for us is this: why are these titles all synonymous?

Is it because they, like us, knew that the Messiah would be God incarnate and so used titles that refer to his incarnate deity (Son of God) interchangeably with titles that refer to his uniquely given role as the Anointed One)?

Or, is it because these titles are truly synonymous in the sense that they actually mean the same thing and refer to the same thing?

**The former is possible, but it requires reading our modern view of the incarnation into their language. Furthermore, it is not the simplest and most straightforward way to analyze these passages. For, consider what Luke does:**

Luke reduces the question simply to "Are you the Anointed One?" Under the above view, he is omitting a whole dimension to the question that is included in the other gospel writers. But he is not omitting anything if Anointed One is completely synonymous with Son of God. On the assumption that Luke is not truncating the account, it follows that he is assuming that Anointed One = Son of God

**The latter view, therefore, is the most straightforward way to put all these passages together.**

<i>If I am right about these passages, then, it is not the deity of Jesus that is at issue in any of these accounts; rather, it is Jesus' status as the unique one sent from God for his unique purpose and role, the one the Jews titled "The Anointed" = the Messiah = the Christ.</i>
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## **John 19: 19-22**

**The issue brought before Pilate was that Jesus claimed to be “King of the Jews”; hence the title Pilate put over Jesus on his cross.**

**What is most likely is that the Jews have described their complaint against Jesus just as it is. In other words, the Jews’ problem with Jesus is precisely what they told Pilate. It is his blasphemous claim to be the “King of the Jews”.**

**If that is right, then clearly their understanding of the term “Son of God” (the word used at Jesus’ trial) is that it is a synonym for “King.”**

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Reprinted below is a previously written analysis of the same information examined above:

### **The Title “Son of God” in Jesus’ Trial Before the Sanhedrin**

(Matthew 26:57–68; Mark 14:60–65; Luke 22:66–71)

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The question put to Jesus by the Sanhedrin, led by the high priest, was “Are you the Christ?” This is exactly how Luke summarizes the inquiry in his account. (Luke 22:67) This is confirmed by both Matthew and Mark in their accounts. However, both Matthew and Mark describe the high priest as phrasing the question in such a way that the high priest uses “Christ” and “Son” in apposition to one another. Matthew puts “Christ” in apposition to “Son of God.” (Matthew 26:63) Mark puts “Christ” in apposition to “Son of the Blessed One.” (Mark 14:61) It stands to reason that “Son of God” and “Son of the Blessed One” are completely synonymous and that Matthew and Mark are in complete agreement in what it was that the high priest was asking Jesus. Hence, so far as the high priest is concerned, calling someone “the Christ” is the same thing as calling someone “the Son of God.” The high priest’s question, therefore, reveals the state of the language among the Jews at the time of Christ—the “Son of God” was a title that referred to the Messiah. (“Christ” is just the Greek translation of the Hebrew word that we transliterate to “Messiah.”) So, if and when Jesus claims to be the “Son of God,” his Jewish contemporaries would have understood him to be claiming to be the Messiah.

In both Matthew’s and Mark’s account, Jesus answers the high priest’s question—are you the Christ, the Son of God?—with an affirmative answer. And then—alluding to a passage in Psalm 110:1 and a statement in Daniel (Daniel 7:13–14)—he implies that he

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will eventually be granted dominion over an everlasting Kingdom by God. The quote from Daniel describes a special human being (one like a "son of man") who is presented before God (the Ancient of Days) and receives an everlasting "dominion, glory, and a kingdom." Psalm 110 describes one who is David's "lord" awaiting his inheritance as King. It describes one who is both priest and King who will victoriously conquer the enemies of God and establish God's rule over all the nations. Presumably, both of these describe the Messiah being granted authority in the coming Kingdom of God. The high priest understands Jesus to be quoting these passages with reference to himself, and therefore understands Jesus to be claiming to be the Messiah, that special human being who will rule as King over the eternal Kingdom of God.

Luke describes the interchange a little differently, but to exactly the same effect. The Sanhedrin asks whether Jesus is the Christ. Jesus then alludes to Psalm 110, implying that it has reference to himself. They then ask him directly "Are you then the Son of God?" To this, Jesus gives a direct answer "yes."

Then all three accounts (Luke only implicitly) describe the Sanhedrin condemning Jesus to death by this testimony that they elicited from his own mouth. Matthew and Mark record that he is charged with blasphemy for his claim to be the Messiah. It is for this blasphemy that he is condemned to death.

The following points are worthy of note:

(1) Jesus is not charged with blasphemy because he claimed to be God. He is charged with blasphemy because he claimed to be the special human being designated by God to rule as King over his eternal Kingdom. The titles that describe that person in these accounts are: Christ (Messiah) and Son of God (or, Son of the Blessed One). Jesus' blasphemy was that he claimed to be the Christ, the Son of God.

(2) Nothing in the passage suggests that Jesus is claiming directly to be God himself. It is still possible that he is making an indirect claim to be God himself. For, if it can be established that to claim to be the Messiah is tantamount to claiming to be God himself, then Jesus' claim to be the Messiah is directly claiming to be God. We will discuss this possibility later. But it is crucial to see here that Jesus is not making a DIRECT claim to be God in his trial before the Sanhedrin.

(3) Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin makes one thing unavoidable: the title "Son of God" is a messianic title, not a divine title. It could still be a title of divinity indirectly. (See point just above.) But, in terms of what the title denotes directly, the claim to be the Son of God is nothing more and nothing less than to claim to be the Christ, the Messiah. And to claim to be the Christ is to claim to be a special human being, not a claim to be God.

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(4) Finally, therefore, when traditional creedal orthodoxy appropriates the title "Son" to denote the second person of the eternal triune Godhead, it is misappropriating the title, if it seeks to ground it in the title "Son of God." The title "Son of God" does not give any warrant to this claim; for "Son of God" denotes that unique human being who is the embodiment of the rule and authority of God himself. It is not a designation of an eternal divine being. Remember that the high priest uses "Christ" and "Son of God" synonymously. If "Son of God" denotes an eternal divine person, then so must the title "Christ." But no scholar I am aware of would use the title Christ to denote the second person of the Trinity. And clearly the high priest, in using the title, could not have intended to denote the second person of the Trinity; for the high priest had no such concept.