

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ to Paul

Presenting a Deeper, Full Christology

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In any discussion of New Testament Christology, Paul's writings become crucial. His involvement in the Christian movement spanned approximately thirty years. He began as an antagonist toward the followers of the Way, but a divine encounter on the road to Damascus convinced him to fight alongside Jesus rather than against him. He became the first missionary to take the good news outside of Palestine, traveling extensively throughout Asia Minor and into Europe, establishing congregations that he left in the hands of trusted associates. Such extensive traveling required that Paul correspond with his congregants through letters, the standard mode of communication in the ancient world. Over the course of his ministry, Paul composed several such letters, fourteen of which have been canonized in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> The earliest of these letters, either 1 Thessalonians or Galatians, was likely written around AD 48 or 49, with other letters following soon after. This early writing date places

a premium upon Paul's letters, as they are the earliest evidence for what the Christian movement believed, predating even the written composition of the four Gospels.

Significantly, much of Paul's information came through his unique revelatory experience, rather than through oral tradition or discussions he may have had with others. In the opening chapter of Galatians, Paul states, "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, *but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 1:12; emphasis added). Later, he would assert to those in Corinth that he had received "visions and revelations of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 12:1). While Paul no doubt learned some of what he knew about Jesus from earlier interactions with apostles such as Peter, he also felt that his own revelatory experiences were equal to, if not more important, than what he learned secondhand. This is not to say that Paul's revelatory experiences gave him access to a *more accurate* understanding of Jesus; rather, they helped him to construct a Christology throughout his letters that is built around both the *past* Jesus that he has heard about and the *present* Jesus that he personally encounters. However, one of the challenges in understanding Paul's Christology is that his letters were often written in response to a particular "occasion" occurring in one of his churches, rather than as an attempt to construct a systematic theology (although Romans comes close).<sup>2</sup> Thus, some letters are more pertinent than others, and they often focus on different aspects of Christ's saving work, with none of them providing a complete view of Paul's understanding of Jesus. But if there is one theme that unifies them all, it is a concern for relaying who Jesus is and why his life and death are so relevant for believers.

The basic kerygmatic pattern of Paul's preaching as revealed in his surviving letters gives us a good sense of what he believed about Jesus's identity and purpose. That is, his preaching followed the basic apostolic proclamation (Greek, *kērygma*) that testified that God sent his Son Jesus who then suffered, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven. But to this he also added important information about Jesus in premortality and details about his future, eschatological roles. As

a result, we will divide Paul's discussions of Jesus into three phases: The "divine Jesus," the "mortal Jesus," and the "exalted Jesus." The first phase, the "divine Jesus," will explore how Paul conceived of the premortal Jesus: Who was he prior to his incarnation? The second, the "mortal Jesus," will examine how Paul understood Jesus's birth and experiences in mortality, looking specifically at one of Paul's favorite images, the cross. Finally, we will consider Paul's understanding of the "exalted Jesus," namely what Jesus became after his resurrection and how that will affect his interactions with humanity in the future.

## The Divine Jesus

There are several places in Paul's letters where he writes of Jesus in a way that suggests he believed Jesus existed prior to his incarnation on earth and that this existence was, somehow, as a divine figure. In this section, we will examine two moves made by Paul in composing this premortal picture of Jesus. First, Paul promotes what has been called a Wisdom Christology, meaning that the Israelite concept of wisdom as a premortal quality or even a personification of the transcendent Israelite God has been appropriated by Christians and applied to Jesus.<sup>3</sup> This appropriation bestows an element of divinity upon Jesus as well as positioning him as the creator and sustainer of the cosmos. Second, Paul promotes a divine identity Christology by identifying Jesus as the same being who in the Hebrew Bible was worshipped as Jehovah.<sup>4</sup>

### *Wisdom Christology*

In Jewish literature prior to the New Testament, particularly in texts such as Proverbs, Job, and the noncanonical Wisdom of Solomon, authors attempted to solve the problem of how a transcendent God could interact in the immanent world by teaching that God possessed an (often feminine) inseparable attribute termed *ḥokmāh* (Greek, *sophia*) or *Wisdom*.<sup>5</sup> It is Wisdom that functions as God's agent in

creating the earth and serves as the expression of the divine presence on the earth, a means of interacting with God in this world in a way that didn't breach monotheism.<sup>6</sup> Thus, an association with Wisdom implies an existence that predates creation. For Christian writers such as Paul, the appropriation of Wisdom became useful when attempting to teach that there could be multiple expressions of God while still maintaining some form of monotheism; rather than two separate beings, Jesus could be seen as God because he was in some way inseparably connected with God, perhaps as an attribute or agent of God.<sup>7</sup> This connection between Jesus and Wisdom can perhaps be seen in Paul's epistle to the church at Corinth, where he writes, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, *Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God*" (1 Corinthians 1:23–24; emphasis added).<sup>8</sup> However, it is important to remember that just because early Christian writers may have borrowed from the Wisdom tradition in order to form a conceptual background in trying to comprehend Jesus (particularly as a premortal being), they were not necessarily claiming that Jesus *was* Wisdom.<sup>9</sup>

The most explicit statement of this Christology comes from a passage in Philippians 2, several verses of which (namely 2:6–11) appear to be an early Christian hymn that has been embedded in Paul's letter.<sup>10</sup> Beginning in Philippians 2:5, the first part of the hymn reads this way:

Let this mind be in you,  
     which was also in Christ Jesus:  
 Who, being in the form of God,  
     thought it not robbery to be equal with God. (2:5–6)

Here, Paul describes how Jesus, prior to his birth on earth, was in the "form" (Greek, *morphē*) of God and was "equal with God" (Greek, *isa theō*). The implication is that Jesus did not feel that he was somehow robbing God by claiming this equality; rather it was something that was inherently within him. Furthermore, Jesus recognized that his

divinity was not something that he need selfishly cling to, something that made him exempt from condescension. Rather, in the words of N. T. Wright, “The pre-existent son regarded equality with God not as excusing him from the task of (redemptive) suffering and death, but actually as uniquely qualifying him for that vocation.”<sup>11</sup> Of the importance of the Philippians hymn in understanding how Paul (and likely other Christians) viewed Jesus’s preexistent, or premortal, state, Larry Hurtado writes, “All this means, as astonishing as it may be that the idea developed so early, that Philippians 2:6–7 should be read as describing the action of the ‘preincarnate’ or ‘pre-existent’ Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

Concomitant with this Wisdom Christology is the fundamental belief that Jesus, like Wisdom (cf. Proverbs 9:1), is the agent of creation. In a second early Christian hymn embedded into one of his letters, this time Colossians 1:15–20, Paul writes, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16–17).<sup>13</sup> How, exactly, Jesus performed these creative acts goes unsaid; Paul’s point is to emphasize that Jesus is the being who performed it. He stands at creation’s head. Yet, somehow, creation was performed *for him*, suggesting that he stands at creation’s end as well.

Colossians also asserts that not only did Jesus create the universe, he is also responsible for sustaining it: “He is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17). The notion that Christ was “before all things” signifies “a continuing stress on the preexistence of Christ and his timeless position of superiority in relation to creation.”<sup>14</sup> The Greek verb translated as “consist” (Greek *synistēmi*) means “to hold together” or “cohere.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, as one scholar has expressed, “not only is Christ the mediator of the initial creation; he is also the means by which God continues to hold the world in existence.”<sup>16</sup> These descriptors recall a revelation to Joseph Smith that describes the power of Jesus Christ, who is “in all and through

all things” and whose power is “in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed” (D&C 88:6, 13). The argument of Colossians 1:17 is similar; without Jesus Christ and his light, the universe would fall apart or disintegrate into darkness.

### *“Divine Identity” Christology*

A second way Paul accentuates the premortal, or “preexistent,” divinity of Jesus is through what New Testament scholar Richard Bauckham has termed divine identity Christology:

I shall argue that high Christology was possible within a Jewish monotheistic context, not by applying to Jesus a Jewish category of semi-divine intermediary status, but by identifying Jesus directly with the one God of Israel, including Jesus in the unique identity of this one God. Jewish monotheism clearly distinguished the one God and all other reality, but the ways in which it distinguished the one God from all else did not prevent the early Christians including Jesus in this unique divine identity. While this was a radically novel development, almost unprecedented in Jewish theology, the character of Jewish monotheism was such that this development did not require any repudiation of the ways in which Jewish monotheism understood the uniqueness of God.<sup>17</sup>

What Bauckham argues is, to put it simply, that early Christians such as Paul included Jesus in the “divine identity” of the God *YHWH*, or Jehovah. When they discussed Jesus, they were discussing Jehovah, and vice versa. This is not to say that Paul and other early Christian authors necessarily believed that Jesus was *actually* Jehovah, as Latter-day Saints do today, only that they found value and meaning in discussing Jesus in similar language. The result was that, in Bauckham’s words, “the earliest Christology was already the highest Christology.”<sup>18</sup> As such, it is related to the Wisdom Christology discussed above, but the focus in this section will be geared toward how

*Jesus Christ* is specifically linked or included in the identification of *Jehovah*. In other words, stories and passages from the Hebrew Bible dealing with or describing *Jehovah* begin to be applied to *Jesus Christ* in a manner that joins the two together and, at least implicitly, gives *Jesus* an additional element of premortal identity.

In the KJV Old Testament, the word “LORD” in small caps renders the Hebrew divine name YHWH and refers to *Jehovah*, the God of Israel who revealed himself to Moses: “And God said unto Moses, I am that I am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). This reflected the Jewish practice of reverencing the divine name by replacing it with the Hebrew *’adōnay* for “my Lord” when reciting the text aloud. Similarly, in the process of translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek (the “Septuagint” or LXX), the translators substituted the Greek noun *kyrios*, or “Lord,” for YHWH, and this practice was followed by New Testament authors such as Paul, who consistently refers to “the Lord *Jesus Christ*” beginning with his earliest correspondence (1 Thessalonians 1:1). While the Greek word *kyrios* can technically refer to either *Jehovah* or a generic lord or master, Paul ascribes to “the Lord *Jesus Christ*” attributes that Jews reserve for *Jehovah*.<sup>19</sup>

This application of this Hebrew Bible verse (Exodus 3:14) to *Jesus Christ* can perhaps be seen most clearly in two passages. The first, Romans 10:1–13, is a lengthy pericope, or passage, in which Paul is arguing that there is only one means of salvation, namely through “the Lord *Jesus*” (Romans 10:9). Paul’s closing remark in 10:13 states: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Paul’s statement here is a quotation of Joel 2:32: “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” When Joel refers to the Lord, he is speaking of *Jehovah*. Paul appropriates Joel’s language and applies it to *Jesus Christ*—with the result that now *Jesus* is filling the role played by *Jehovah*. This is a critical move by Paul—one he will do again and again—and, in the words of one scholar, “eliminates the possibility of thinking of the God of Israel, YHWH, as apart from the human being *Jesus*. This unitive

relationship is dialectical and hinges in fact on unreserved identification of one with the other as well as on clear differentiation.”<sup>20</sup>

A second example returns us to the Christ hymn embedded in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. As we saw, the hymn stated that before Christ came to earth “in the likeness of men” he was “equal with God” (Philippians 2:6). And after the mortal Jesus experienced “death of the cross,” God “highly exalted” Jesus, restoring him to his former divine status, and gave him “a name which is above every name” (2:8–9). What is this highly exalted name or identity? Paul explained that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” and “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (2:10–11). The hymn’s words appear to be an allusion to a passage in Isaiah 45, where Jehovah declared that “unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isaiah 45:23). Thus, Paul again identifies Jesus Christ with Jehovah, the one to whom everyone should direct their worship and devotion.<sup>21</sup>

Notably, this type of scriptural application did not just pertain to scriptural passages. Paul was also fond of using biblical narrative to promote this “divine identity.” In 1 Corinthians, Paul identified Jesus Christ as the “spiritual Rock that followed” the people of Moses during their journeys in the wilderness of Sinai and who provided for them “spiritual meat” and “spiritual drink” (1 Corinthians 10:3–4). Paul also warned the Corinthians not to “murmur” or “tempt Christ” as the Israelites did long ago “and were destroyed of serpents” (1 Corinthians 10:9–10). These, of course, are events associated with Jehovah in the Old Testament. He miraculously provided life-saving manna and water throughout the wilderness experience, although the children of Israel murmured and rebelled against him before many of them were killed by poisonous snakes.<sup>22</sup>

## The Mortality of Jesus

While Paul’s letters provide a significant amount of evidence that he understood and taught a premortal Jesus, a divine being who is



intricately linked with the Hebrew God Jehovah, the crux of Paul's Christology rests in Jesus's mortal life and his exaltation following his death. For Paul, there are two crucial elements of Jesus's mortal life that must be properly understood. First, Jesus was a *human* being; he was not a spirit who may have looked human, nor was he just a divine being who simply dwelt on earth. Jesus was born of a mortal woman and lived a mortal life, yet he did so as a divine being. Paul relays these two seemingly paradoxical points through a conception Christology and an incarnation Christology. Second, Jesus's suffering and sacrifice were a real event that culminated on the cross, which becomes the most potent symbol of Pauline Christology. We will discuss both of these ideas in this section.

### *Jesus's Humanity—Conception and Incarnation*

Although Paul never explicitly discusses the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus in the same way that Matthew and Luke so beautifully do, his epistle to the Galatians contains the earliest documented mention of Jesus's birth:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, *made of a woman*, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:4–5; emphasis added)

In this concise summary of Jesus's mortal mission, Paul teaches that God sent his son and that this son was "made of a woman."<sup>23</sup> This statement in itself speaks to the premortal life of Jesus—How could God "send" him if he didn't already exist? When Paul proceeds to explain that this Son was "made," he uses the Greek term *ginomai*, which simply means "born" (cf. Matthew 11:11).<sup>24</sup> The following clause, "made ("born") under the law," suggests that not only did Jesus come into the world in the same *fashion* as everyone else (namely through a woman), but he also came into the same *circumstances* as everyone else—he is as subject to the law as each one of

us.<sup>25</sup> Paul will emphasize these same points again in his epistle to the Romans, where in the salutation of the letter he writes, “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, *which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh*” (Romans 1:3; cf. 9:4–5; emphasis added). Jesus was a descendant of David the same way we are descendants of our ancestors.<sup>26</sup> The danger of a conception Christology is that some readers could interpret Paul to mean that because Jesus was born and experienced mortality, he was not divine prior to his birth.<sup>27</sup> He was simply exalted by God at his death. Perhaps anticipating this, Paul maintains that Jesus, although human and mortal, was somehow also divine in what is often termed incarnation Christology.<sup>28</sup> This type of Christology suggests that Jesus was, as John puts it, the “word [a divine being] made flesh” (see John 1:14).

Returning again to the Philippians hymn, we saw how this hymn explicitly states that the premortal Jesus was divine, but that he didn’t feel that his divinity was something that he needed to selfishly cling to (Philippians 2:6). In the following verse, the hymn relays that Jesus “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (2:7). The statement that Jesus “made himself of no reputation” is a rather clumsy English translation of the Greek verb *kenoō*, which simply means “to empty,” suggesting that Jesus divested himself of some measure of divinity in becoming mortal. The word “likeness” (Greek, *morphē*) is a word brimming with ambiguity that nonetheless “preserves both the similarity of Christ to human beings in his full humanity and the dissimilarity of Christ to fallen humanity in his equality with God and his sinless obedience.”<sup>29</sup> While the theological implications of this statement are the topic of much debate, Latter-day Saints can easily see Paul as intending something similar to Nephi’s understanding of “the condescension of God,” by which divine Jehovah set aside his divinity to become the child of Mary and then proceed forth in the ministry of the man Jesus (see 1 Nephi 11:12–33).

### *Jesus's Sacrifice—Suffering and the Cross*

With Paul's understanding of the premortality and incarnation of Jesus in mind, the imagery and meaning of the cross becomes even more central to understanding Paul's Christology. As James D. G. Dunn has written, "There can be no doubt as to where the centre of gravity of Paul's theology is to be found. It lies in the death and resurrection of Jesus."<sup>30</sup> One of the primary reasons why Paul finds meaning in the cross is that it represented the ultimate scandal—Jesus, the premortal, divine Son of God, sent from heaven to earth, is now nailed to a cross. This scandal, or at least paradox, becomes even clearer in view of the christological title favored by Paul. In his writings and those attributed to him, Paul consistently employed the Greek term *christos* as both a title and as a name to refer to Jesus (i.e., Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, Christ). Meaning "anointed one," *christos* is the equivalent to the Hebrew word *māšīah*, or "messiah." In ancient Israel, different types of individuals were anointed, including prophets (1 Kings 19:16), priests (Exodus 40:13–16), and kings (1 Samuel 16:13). For Paul, Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promises concerning one who would come forth through the lineage of David (Romans 1:3), commissioned to rule Israel in righteousness as the true prophet, priest, and king (2 Samuel 7:12–17). This has a particularly important meaning when we consider Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection. As Larry Hurtado has noted, "It is . . . significant that *Christos* is particularly used in sentences that refer to Jesus' death and resurrection. . . . These statements declare the innovative early Christian claim that the work of *Christos*/Messiah involves his redemptive death and resurrection."<sup>31</sup>

Yet Paul's provocative claim that Jesus was the Messiah—in particular a crucified messiah—conflicted with both Jewish as well as non-Jewish sensibilities during that time period. Although among the Jews of Paul's day there were varied expectations concerning the messiah, many expected a powerful military messiah who would deliver Israel from Roman oppression.<sup>32</sup> Paul seemingly

recognized the trouble that much of his audience would have reconciling these messianic expectations with the reality of Jesus's death. To the Corinthians Paul declared that "we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23). The Greek word translated as "stumblingblock" (*skandalon*) literally means "scandal." It was a scandalous idea to a typical first-century Jewish audience to claim that the Messiah was not powerful but rather died a humiliating death upon the cross at the hands of others.<sup>33</sup> In the Roman world, crucifixion was a gruesome form of execution reserved specifically for noncitizens with no rights. The idea that Christians worshipped a convicted and executed criminal was foolishness to a non-Jewish audience.<sup>34</sup> Believers, on the other hand, understand the true significance of the Messiah's crucifixion, as Paul testified: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

So, what was the connection between the cross and the "power of God" that Paul promotes so compellingly? Why would he term his gospel message "the preaching of the cross," as he does in 1 Corinthians 1:18? The answer may well be found in what we term an atonement or sacrificial Christology. First, the cross helped readers focus upon the *suffering* and *sacrifice* of Jesus. To the Romans, Paul described the death of Christ in terms of sacrifice: God sent "his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" (Romans 8:3)—meaning to be a "sin offering" (NIV). Specifically, as Paul taught the Corinthians, Jesus Christ was a "passover" offering "sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Just as animals were sacrificed under the law of Moses "to make atonement" for sinners (Leviticus 1:3–5), so also the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was an atonement for sin, described variously by Paul as "for the ungodly" and "for us" (Romans 5:6, 8)—in short, "for all" (2 Corinthians 5:14–15). In addition, the death of Christ has "abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality" to everyone (2 Timothy 1:10). Thus, all humankind is "reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Romans 5:10). This selfless act of atonement

makes Jesus Christ both “the Saviour of all men” (1 Timothy 4:10) who “hath redeemed us from the curse of the law” (Galatians 3:13) and “from all iniquity” (Titus 2:14), as well as the one “mediator between God and men” (1 Timothy 2:5) who “maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34). This is Christ’s “free gift” of “grace” to a fallen humanity (Romans 5:15). Ultimately, the one who “knew no sin” was made “to be sin for us,” so that we through him could be restored (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Second, the cross helps readers focus on the *victory* that is won through the cross. As we mentioned above, many saw the cross as a sign of the scandal of Christianity. Yet for Paul, that is why it becomes the perfect symbol for the movement; only those who have faith can recognize that in the cross the true believer meets the Son of God. It is when we acknowledge, as Paul did, that we all suffer from “a thorn in the flesh,” yet recognize that when we are weak, then are we strong (compare 2 Corinthians 12:7, 10). As the Lord told Paul when Paul sought to have his own thorn removed, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul’s words seem paradoxical on the surface—how can we be strong when we are weak? For Paul, the strength comes through the expression of humility, and this expression of humility brings each of us face-to-face with the crucified Jesus, who was also strongest when he was weakest, who exercised the ultimate humility in condescending to earth and submitting himself to the will of the Father.

Yet there may be something deeper that runs through Paul’s words. It is hard for us to understand this, living in a time when the cross carries so much positive religious meaning, but we cannot underestimate “the unspeakable horror and loathing which the very mention or thought of the cross provoked in Paul’s day.”<sup>35</sup> In fact, the Roman poet and rhetorician Cicero once wrote that he wished that even the name *cross* (Lat. *crux*) would be removed far from the mind and ears of the Roman citizens, such great odium did that word carry.<sup>36</sup> Yet Paul, writing to the Galatians, proudly declares

that “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14). Embracing the cross and all that it represents means a complete repudiation of what the world stands for and turns accepted cultural values upside down. For Paul, acceptance of Jesus means the rejection of the world, both in the sense that Paul rejects the world, but also in the sense that the world rejects him. This radical reassessment of cultural values may have led Paul to one his most evocative images. In Colossians, Paul writes: “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:14–15). In the first part of this statement, Jesus takes something akin to an indictment against us for our sins and nails it to his cross, signifying that he has paid our price. Then, even more strikingly, Jesus takes the “principalities and powers” and parades them in front of everyone. Whereas Jesus had been raised upon the cross, hideously murdered and shamed in front of the world, now the triumphant Jesus leads the defeated powers of this world, stripped and exposed, behind him. In the death of Jesus, what was wrong has been set right, and the stage is prepared for the exaltation of the Son of God.

## The Exalted Jesus

Having considered how Paul conceived of the premortal and the mortal Jesus, we now turn our attention to the postmortal Jesus, where Paul develops two additional christological ideas. The first is commonly termed resurrection or exaltation Christology.<sup>37</sup> This type of Christology presents Jesus as God’s Son through his resurrection from the dead and his being raised up to heaven and reigning from his throne. The second type of Christology Paul develops that centers on the postmortal Jesus is sometimes termed *parousia* Christology because it focuses upon the glorious appearance (Greek, *parousia*) of

Jesus, when he returns at some point in the future as the glorious King to judge his people and permanently establish his kingdom.<sup>38</sup> This type of Christology may, in fact, be one of the oldest types of Christology in the New Testament because of the recording of the Aramaic phrase *maranā thā*, meaning “Let the Lord come” in 1 Corinthians 16:22.<sup>39</sup>

### *Resurrection/Exaltation Christology*

Paramount for Paul is the belief that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. If there is no resurrection, then belief in Jesus is unwarranted and, quite frankly, useless. Paul repeated one of the earliest credal summaries of Christian belief to the Corinthians, “that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:4).<sup>40</sup> As proof of this glorious reality, Paul cited numerous resurrection appearances of Jesus: to Cephas (Peter) and to the twelve (15:5), to a group of more than “five hundred brethren” (15:6), to James (the Lord’s brother) and to all of the apostles (15:7), and finally to Paul himself (15:8). Jesus Christ was the first to experience resurrection—becoming “the firstfruits of them that slept” (15:20) and solidifying the hope for all humankind “to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2 Corinthians 5:2). Thus, for Paul, the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead is of utmost importance for the Christian faith, for “if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14). And if the resurrection of Christ never occurred, Paul asserted, then “we are found [to be] false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ” (15:15).

The reality of the resurrection allows Paul to connect Jesus with Adam and present him as a “second Adam.”<sup>41</sup> To the Corinthians, Paul offered this comparison between Adam and Jesus: “Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:21–22). This is a reference to the resurrection of Christ providing the way for all humankind to be resurrected. Later in this same

chapter, Paul discussed the difference between mortal bodies and resurrected bodies: “So also is the resurrection of the dead” (15:42). Mortal or natural bodies are sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness, while resurrected or spiritual bodies are raised in incorruption, glory, and power (see 15:42–44). Thus, extending his comparison of Adam and Christ: “The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven” (15:47).<sup>42</sup>

The resurrection of Jesus is a *sine qua non* doctrine for other reasons as well. For Paul, the resurrection demonstrates who Jesus is—his eternal identity. To the Romans, Paul testified very clearly his belief that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead*” (Romans 1:4; emphasis added). As the resurrected Son of God, Jesus rules as true king, subjecting all things to himself, who will reign until he has delivered up the kingdom to God his Father (1 Corinthians 15:24–28). As the resurrected Son of God, Jesus is the Savior of humankind, “to redeem them that were under the law” (Galatians 4:5), thus allowing all people to become part of the family of God and cry out with Christ: “Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15).<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps the most vivid picture of Jesus’s exaltation comes, again, from the Christ hymn in Philippians 2. Following Jesus’s “pouring out” of himself and taking on a mortal form, Paul writes:

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,  
and given him a name which is above every name:  
That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under  
the earth;  
And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9–11)

We already saw that one of the moves Paul makes here is to link Jesus Christ with Jehovah by appropriating language from Isaiah 45 in his description of what will happen “at the name of Jesus.” What is pertinent at this point is that God has “highly exalted” Jesus. The Greek



verb translated as “exalted” is *hyperhypsōō*, a compound verb that combines the preposition *hyper* (“above”) with the verb *hypsōō*, “to lift or raise up.” The implication, according to scholar Gordon D. Fee, is that God “exalted him (Jesus) to the highest possible degree.”<sup>44</sup> While the exact meaning of this verb and how it is being used is unclear, one scholar writes that it “stresses the incomparable transcendence and absolute majesty of Christ.”<sup>45</sup> In other words, Jesus has been lifted up as high as he can go; he is truly the “Lord.” In addition to the statement here in Philippians 2:9, Paul also declared to the Colossians that Christ now “sitteth on the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1) and that God raised Jesus “from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:20) while putting “all things under his feet” (1:22).<sup>46</sup>

### *Second Coming, or Parousia, Christology*

Paul taught both that the resurrected Jesus would literally return to the earth and that when he did he would judge humanity. In 1 Thessalonians, one of Paul’s earliest letters, he reminded his readers that when he originally visited them, he taught the people to “[turn] to God” and to “wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead” (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10). Sometime later, it seems that some members of the Thessalonian branch were concerned that those among them who died before the Second Coming may be at a disadvantage when Christ returned. Paul reassured them that “we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [or “precede”] them which are asleep” (1 Thessalonians 4:15).<sup>47</sup> This is because at the time of the Second Coming “the dead in Christ shall rise first” and return with him (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 14). Then, as Paul further explained, “we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).<sup>48</sup> Paul further warned them to pay attention to the signs of the times because Christ would return “as a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2).<sup>49</sup> This, of course, recalls the teaching of

Jesus from his Olivet Discourse that eventually would be recorded in the Gospel of Matthew: “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched” (Matthew 24:42–43).

Paul also taught that the resurrected Jesus would act as final judge of all humankind. Paul warned the church at Rome that God is the ultimate judge of his children on earth and that in the future there would be a “day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:5). But Paul also suggested that Jesus Christ would play a specific and important role in carrying out the will of God at the final judgment. Thus to the Romans Paul explained that there would be a “day when God shall judge the secrets of men by [i.e. through] Jesus Christ” (Romans 2:16). Later in that same letter, Paul declared that “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10), and that at that judgment seat “every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). In Paul’s concluding testimony to his beloved associate Timothy, Paul testified: “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:1). Thankfully, as Paul taught, God is full of mercy (Ephesians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 1:3) and Jesus Christ “came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

## **Paul’s Deeper, Full Understanding of Jesus as “the Christ”**

Though occasional in nature and never claiming to be comprehensive treatises on what it meant that Jesus is the Christ, Paul’s letters nonetheless provide a very vivid and vibrant depiction of Jesus, revealing him to be the divine Son of God and the vital agent of our salvation. Using multiple Christologies, Paul presented multiple insights into the premortal, divine Jesus; the mortal, human Jesus; and the

resurrected, exalted Jesus. Through a Wisdom Christology, he establishes that Jesus had a divine preexistence, or premortal life, where he served as *creator* and *sustainer* of the earth. Through a Christology of divine identity, Paul intricately links Jesus with Jehovah through creative exegesis of scripture and narrative. Through a conception Christology, Paul argues that Jesus was born in a normal, mortal fashion and was just as human as his associates. However, through an incarnation Christology, Paul also demonstrates that Jesus's morality included some level of divinity. It was this unity of mortality and immortality, human and divine, which gave such powerful and efficacious meaning to the cross. Finally, through a resurrection, or exaltation, Christology, Paul argues that Jesus reigns in heaven as a resurrected being, lifted up by the Father himself. The promise that Jesus will one day return and judge humanity is relayed through Paul's parousia Christology. All these christological streams must be studied carefully if readers are to realize the richness of Paul's portrait of Jesus Christ.

Paul's testimony of Jesus Christ, as contained in his many letters to his converts, echoes the solemn witness of modern apostles:

He was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New. Under the direction of His Father, He was the creator of the earth. . . . He taught the truths of eternity. . . . He instituted the sacrament as a reminder of His great atoning sacrifice. He was arrested and condemned on spurious charges, convicted to satisfy a mob, and sentenced to die on Calvary's cross. He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. . . . He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world. He rose from the grave to "become the firstfruits of them that slept." . . . He will someday return to earth. . . . Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts. . . . Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands

today on the right hand of His Father. . . . God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son.<sup>50</sup>

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## Notes

1. This number of fourteen is correct only if Pauline authorship is accepted for all the epistles attributed to Paul. However, scholars remain greatly divided on this question. The general consensus is that seven of Paul's letters (1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon) are considered "genuine." Three letters (Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians) are considered questionable and have been labeled "deutero-Pauline." Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) is argued for only by the most conservative scholars, while the Epistle to the Hebrews is rarely considered, if at all, to be authored by Paul. The arguments for and against Pauline authorship tend to rely on grammar, word choice, and theology, so differences in grammar and word choice should not be interpreted as being indicators of multiple authors. Rather, Paul's use of scribes in the composition process could be a considerable factor in what grammar and word choice are employed throughout a letter. See Lincoln Blumell, "Scribes and Ancient Letters: Implications for the Pauline Epistles," in *How the New Testament Came to Be: The 35th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Frank F. Judd Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 208–26. A useful introduction to the issues surrounding Paul's epistles can also be found in Luke Timothy Johnson,

*The Writings of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 237–42. In the course of this paper, we will omit the Epistle to the Hebrews but will treat the remaining thirteen letters as if they were written by Paul. For more on the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, see Terrence L. Szink, “Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *How the New Testament Came to Be*, 243–59.

2. On the “occasional nature” of Paul’s letters, see Eric D. Huntsman, “The Occasional Nature, Composition, and Structure of Paul’s Letters,” in *How the New Testament Came to Be*, 190–207.
3. For convenience, we will refer to the applicable references in Thomas P. Rausch’s short and concise study of New Testament Christology, *Who Is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003). For Wisdom Christology, see 137–38. The classic (and still very useful) study of Christology is Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994). For Pauline Christology in particular, see Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007).
4. See Rausch, *Who Is Jesus?*, 139–42. We recognize that these two types of Christologies could be reasonably viewed as two sides of the same coin. However, we tease them apart here to try to emphasize, specifically for Latter-day Saints, how the ideas of premortality and the identification of Jesus with Jehovah may have been expressed by Paul.
5. For understandable reasons, the study of Wisdom’s relationship to deity has been pursued heavily by feminist scholars. See, for example, Karen Torjesen, “Wisdom, Christology, and Women Prophets,” in *Jesus Then and Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Charles Hughes (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 186–200. For a contrary perspective, see Karen H. Jobes, “Sophia Christology: The Way of Wisdom?,” in *Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Bruce K. Waltke*, ed. J. I. Packer and Sven K. Soderlund (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 226–50.
6. The classic study of Wisdom literature is Gerhard von Rad’s *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (Harrisburg, Trinity Press International, 1972), although his claim that apocalyptic literature arose from Wisdom

literature has been heavily challenged. For a study of how Wisdom literature was applied to Jesus, see Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000).

7. An in-depth survey of the arguments for and against the application of a Wisdom Christology to Jesus is found in Aquila H. I. Lee, *From Messiah to Preexistent Son: Jesus' Self-Consciousness and Early Christian Exegesis of Messianic Psalms* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 2–25. For arguments for and against the influence of Wisdom literature on Paul's Christology, see Bruce K. Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 128–31. For the problem of defining Jewish monotheism and assessing the Christian understanding and reaction to it, see *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E. S. North, JSNTS 263 (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).
8. The identification of Jesus with wisdom was not limited to Paul among early Christians. In fact, this identification would become a critical point of controversy in the discussions between Arius and Athanasius that led to the formation of the Nicene Creed. The Emperor Constantine's dedication of a church, the Hagia Sophia, to Jesus suggests that he equated the two, and the idea that Jesus is Wisdom incarnate continues to be part of Eastern Orthodox tradition. See discussion in Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 127–28.
9. "It is a mistake to give too much explanatory value to the Wisdom figure in the development of the doctrine of Christ. Personified Wisdom is a way of talking about God's work in the World. But Jesus, as a distinct person, along with the Father and the Spirit, is identified as God." Daniel J. Ebert IV, *Wisdom Christology: How Jesus Became God's Wisdom* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2011), 5. However, see also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2015), 161–65.
10. For more on the Philippians hymn, see Thomas A. Wayment, "Each Person Has a Hymn: The Creator-Savior Hymns," 197–202, in this volume.
11. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 83–84.
12. Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 123.

13. This Colossian Christ-hymn also contributes useful information as to the preexistent, or premortal, divine nature of Jesus, specifically as the “first-born of every creature” (Colossians 1:15).
14. Jerry L. Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 70.
15. “The use of the perfect tense suggests a stative idea: the universe owes its continuing coherence to Christ.” Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 125.
16. Sumney, *Colossians*, 70.
17. Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology of the New Testament* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1998), 4. More recently, N. T. Wright has written in favor of Bauckham’s divine identity Christology and added that “what matters is the pre-Christian Jewish ideas about Israel’s God. *Jesus’ first followers found themselves not only (as it were) permitted to use God-language for Jesus, but compelled to use Jesus language for the One God*” (emphasis in the original). N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 655.
18. Bauckham, *God Crucified*, viii.
19. A provocative example of this type of synthesis can be seen in 1 Corinthians 8:6: “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Corinthians 8:6; emphasis added). Here Paul seems to be skating a fine line between monotheism and binitarianism. On one hand, Paul may be intentionally alluding to the *shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4 and aligning “Lord” and “God,” both of which refer to Jehovah in Deuteronomy 6:4, with “Jesus Christ” and “the Father.” On the other, Paul may have something akin to Abinadi’s argument in mind, where Abinadi argues before the priests of King Noah that Jesus is both “the Father” and “the Son” based upon what role or function he is fulfilling (cf. Mosiah 15:1–4; Ether 3:14). If the latter, Paul would be claiming that Jesus as “the Father” was the source of all life, while Jesus as “Lord” was the creator or organizer of all life. Of Paul’s theological move, one scholar writes, “The statement of the unique lordship of Jesus Christ is central to Paul’s theology in general and to this letter in particular. The ‘Christological monotheism’ affirmed

- here distinguishes the Christian community from both non-Christian Judaism and gentile paganism. Jewish monotheism is affirmed against all forms of pagan polytheism (or atheism), while, against non-Christian Judaism, Christ is understood to participate in God's identity." Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 383.
20. C. Kavin Rowe, "Romans 10:13: What Is the Name of the Lord?," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 22 (2000): 136–37. For a thorough accounting of Pauline passages that describe Jesus through evoking Jehovah, see David B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology*, WUNT 2, no. 47 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992).
  21. Frank F. Judd Jr., "The Condescension of God according to Paul," in *Shedding Light on the New Testament: Acts–Revelation*, ed. Ray L. Huntington, Frank F. Judd Jr., and David M. Whitchurch (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2009), 171–92.
  22. See, for example, Exodus 16:1–31; Numbers 20:1–13; 21:4–9.
  23. For more, see Reginald H. Fuller, "The Conception/Birth of Jesus as a Christological Moment," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 1 (1978): 37–52.
  24. "The expression means to be born as a human being." J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 390. However, it should be noted that Paul doesn't use the more common verb for "beget," *gennaō*, although it is safe to say he probably views them synonymously.
  25. "The true humanity of the Son and his unity with mankind is underlined by a twofold statement: (a) he was 'born of a woman'—the woman being not only the means of his entrance into the world but also the one from whom he took everything which is proper to mankind (though he knew no sin, 2 Cor. 5:21); (b) he was 'born under the law'—his very birth as man placing him immediately under subjection to the law." Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 182.
  26. "Here, however, the meaning will be as far as human nature, or perhaps physical descent, is concerned. On the level of flesh, of human life, Jesus really was a descendant of David." Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*



- (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 44. However, this statement should not be interpreted to mean that Paul believed Jesus was descended literally from Joseph: “Paul is using the word *sperma* in the figurative sense, as it often appears in the OT (Gen 12:7; 15:13; 2 Sam 7:12; Ps 89:5), and scarcely in the literal sense of semen.” Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 234.
27. For the arguments and implications surrounding conception Christology, see Andrew T. Lincoln, *Born of a Virgin? Reconceiving Jesus in the Bible, Tradition, and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 266–302.
  28. “An incarnation Christology, then, maintains that Christ was a preexistent divine being who became human before returning to God in heaven. Here, Jesus is not understood to be a human who is elevated to divine status; instead, he is a heavenly being who condescends to become temporarily human.” Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 249.
  29. G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 153.
  30. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 208.
  31. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 100–101.
  32. See, for example, the plea in the Psalms of Solomon, written approximately in the first century BC: “Raise up for them their king, the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel. . . . And gird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem from gentiles . . . to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter’s jar . . . to destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth. . . . And he will be a righteous king over them, taught by God. There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days, for all shall be holy, and their king shall be the Lord Messiah.” Psalms of Solomon 17:21–24, 32.
  33. Jesus’s Jewish disciples may have had similar expectations about the Messiah. After Peter declared Jesus was the Messiah (Matthew 16:16), Jesus then confided to his disciples for the first time that “he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and

scribes, and be killed" (16:21). In response, Peter protested: "this shall not be unto thee" (16:22). Jesus told Peter that he was relying upon human expectations concerning the messiah, rather than "the things that be of God" (16:23).

34. An example of this attitude is the famous Alexamenos graffito, which was discovered in Rome, dates to around AD 200, and mocks the idea that Jesus was crucified. This image depicts a man worshipping a donkey-headed man being crucified. The Greek inscription below the image reads: "Alexander worships his god."
35. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 271.
36. Cicero, *Pro Rabiro* 16. ("sed tamen in omni calamitate retinetur aliquod vestigium libertatis. mors denique si proponitur, in libertate moriamur, carnifex vero et obductio capitis et nomen ipsum crucis absit non modo a corpore civium Romanorum sed etiam a cogitatione, oculis, auribus").
37. See Rausch, *Who Is Jesus?*, 129–30.
38. See Rausch, *Who Is Jesus?*, 127–29.
39. It is also possible to divide this phrase at a different point, *maran 'athā*, which would be interpreted as "the Lord has come" in the perfect tense. This interpretation, however, makes little sense in the context of 1 Corinthians 16:22, and the majority of scholars go with the imperative "Let the Lord come!" For more, see C. F. D. Moule, "A Reconstruction of the Context of *Maranatha*," *New Testament Studies* 6 (1959/60): 307–10.
40. Paul taught that Jesus was resurrected on the "third day" (1 Corinthians 15:4), allowing for a chronology where Jesus was crucified Friday, in the tomb Saturday, and raised Sunday morning. Other scriptural sources, however, state that Jesus was dead for "three days" (Matthew 26:61; 27:40, 63; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19–20; Helaman 14:20, 27) or "three days and three nights" (Matthew 12:40). An in-depth discussion and reconciliation of these ideas is beyond the scope of this paper. For more information, see David B. Cummings, "Three Days and Three Nights: Reassessing Jesus's Entombment," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 56–73, 86; and Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Dating the Death of Jesus Christ," *BYU Studies* 54, no. 4 (2015): 135–91.

41. This comparison between Jesus and Adam that is developed by Paul is often referred to as second Adam or last Adam Christology. What it means, essentially, is that “Adam stands for death, and Jesus stands for life,” so “in and by the resurrection, Christ became ‘last Adam.’” Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 241. See also Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 98–128.
42. See the discussion in Gordon D. Fee, *Jesus the Lord according to Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 51–55.
43. King Benjamin similarly taught that when believers make a covenant with Jesus Christ, they become part of a new spiritual family unit: “And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you” (Mosiah 5:7).
44. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 396.
45. Hansen, *Letter to the Philippians*, 162.
46. This is the way Jesus himself interpreted Psalm 110:1 as recorded in that Gospel of Matthew. In that reference, Jesus asked the Pharisees, “What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?” They answered, “The Son of David” (Matthew 22:42), emphasizing the Messiah as merely a human descendant of King David. Jesus countered by quoting Psalm 110:1, teaching that David’s reference to the Messiah as “my Lord” (or “my master”) demonstrates that the Messiah was more than just David’s human descendant (Matthew 22:43–45). See R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 850–52.
47. It appears that some early Christians, possibly even Paul himself, felt that Christ was going to return very soon—within their own lifetimes. This should not be surprising, for the same seems to be true of early Latter-day Saints. See Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999). It is interesting that the JST changes “we which are alive” to “they which are alive.”
48. The English verb *caught up* comes from the Latin verb *rapiō*, from which other Christians derive the name of the doctrine of the Rapture. It should be noted, however, that even though Latter-day Saints may not refer to

this teaching as the Rapture, they believe the doctrine Paul taught. This doctrine was revealed anew in the latter days (D&C 88:96–98).

49. See the discussion in Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 164–88.
50. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, April 2000.