Paul’s Messianic Christology

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Abstract
Contrary to frequent scholarly claims, Jesus’ messianic status is integral to and significant in Paul’s christology. Also, contrary to claims often made, the christology and devotional stance that Paul affirmed (and shared with others in the early Jesus-movement) was not a departure from or a transcending of a supposedly monochrome Jewish messianism, but, instead, a distinctive expression within a variegated body of Jewish messianic hopes. In this paper, applying text-critical categories as a model, I first propose that we view Paul’s “christology” and devotional stance as comprising a particular and remarkable variant-form of Jewish messianism among the diversity of messianic figures and beliefs reflected in second-temple Jewish texts. I then discuss features that made it a distinctive and noteworthy expression of Jewish messianism.

A Messianic Jesus

In the following pages I discuss particular features of Paul’s christology that I contend comprise a distinctive and noteworthy version of second-temple Jewish messianism. To use a text-critical analogy, just as there was a textual pluriformity in biblical writings in the second-temple period (evident in the biblical manuscripts from Qumran), so there was a pluriformity in Jewish messianic hopes and figures; and I contend that Paul’s beliefs about Jesus constitute an especially noteworthy instance of that diversity.¹ So, I propose that Paul’s christology reflects a particular, distinctive (in some ways unique) “variant-form” of Jewish messianism. This will entail the prior judgement that Jesus’ messianic status is integral and important in Paul’s christological beliefs and devotional practice. So, I begin by addressing this latter issue, which, in light of an important recent publication, I believe can be done briefly.

¹ See, e.g., John J. Collins, The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature (New York: Doubleday, 1995), who posits “four distinct messianic paradigms”: “king, priest, prophet, and heavenly messiah or Son of Man” (195). “There were different messianic paradigms, not one composite concept of Messiah” (196). But he also notes that there were occasionally instances of the merging of two or more of these paradigms, forming “a composite figure” (195). See also Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in biblical and Related Literature (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Andrew Chester, Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology (WUNT 207; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), esp. 191-327, 329-63, who judged “it is not possible to speak of a single form of messianic expectation or concept . . .; instead, we have to reckon with a variety of different kinds of beliefs and figures” (355).
I consider that the argument that Jesus’ messianic significance was an important factor in Paul’s christology has been strengthened considerably in the excellent study by my Edinburgh colleague, Matthew Novenson, recently published: Christ among the Messiahs. In this work, he first addresses the much-debated linguistic question of how χριστός functioned in Paul’s discourse. A number of scholars have judged that, despite (or even because of) the frequency of Paul’s usage of the appellative, in his letters χριστός is (or is virtually) a name, with little (or nothing) of its meaning/usage as “messiah” remaining or of significance.

But Novenson shows (persuasively to my mind) that in Paul’s usage χριστός should be seen as an example of a particular onomastic category, the “honorific.” Novenson defines an honorific as “a word that can function as a stand-in for a personal name but part of whose function is to retain its supernominal associations.” That is, Paul reflects second-temple Jewish usage of χριστός (and equivalents in other ancient languages) as an appellative for a figure (typically a human) who will act as God’s agent of eschatological redemption; but in Paul’s usage the term is applied exclusively and restrictively to Jesus. Indeed, in Paul’s usage the term is tied to Jesus so tightly that it can serve on its own to designate him (about 150 times in the uncontested letters, e.g., 1 Cor 15:3, 12-28). Paul’s exclusive association of the term with Jesus is what has misled those who have characterized χριστός in his usage as (merely) a name.

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3 E.g., Chester, “Messianism, Mediators, and Pauline Christology,” Messiah and Exaltation, 329-96 (see esp. 382-83), who judges that “Christ” in Paul is “mainly bland and apparently insignificant in the way it is used” (383), and who queries how it is that Paul “managed to circumvent or ignore” the messianic tradition (and earlier emphasis on Jesus as Messiah) “almost entirely” (384).
4 Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 138. I acknowledge that Novenson’s case that Paul’s use of χριστός is an instance of an “honorific” is a superior way of capturing what I meant in referring to the frequency of Paul’s application of the term to Jesus as such that “the term practically functions as a name for Jesus” (“Paul’s Christology,” in The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul, ed. J. D. G. Dunn [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 191), and that χριστός “functions almost like an alternate name” for Jesus (Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 99). It appears that my phrasing misled Novenson into including me among those who hold “the axiom that Paul’s χριστός is a name, not a title” (Christ Among the Messiahs, 66 n. 12).
5 The obvious text regarded as exhibiting Jewish use of χριστός in particular as an appellative for a royal messianic figure is Pss.Sol. 17–18. Of course, in the Hebrew Bible and extra-biblical Jewish texts, “anointed (one)” (מֶשֶךְ) can have various applications, and messianic figures may not always be referred to as מֶשֶךְ. To cite Collins (The Scepter and the Star, 12), “a messiah is an eschatological figure who sometimes, but not necessarily always, is designated as מֶשֶךְ in the ancient sources.” And for Collins’s treatment of Pss.Sol., see 49-56.
Novenson points to analogies, such as use of the honorific “Augustus” for Octavian, similarly “Epiphanes” uniquely designating Antiochus IV, and, among Jewish examples, Judah “Maccabee” and Shimon “bar Kochba.” To cite Novenson’s concisely expressed judgement: “Paul’s χριστός is an honorific, and it works according to the syntactical rules that govern that onomastic category.” As Novenson concludes later in his study, “If χριστός in Paul seems to be not quite a title and not quite a name, this is not because it is on an evolutionary path from the one category to the other but because it is generically something else.” If Dahl’s classic essay, in which he laid out “philological observations” that seemed to lead to “negative conclusions,” has served heretofore as the key analysis of Paul’s usage of χριστός, I judge that Novenson’s study has superseded it, and must now be regarded as the definitive treatment of the philological question.

Second, in an analysis of a selection of “Christ passages in Paul,” Novenson shows that “Paul does all that we normally expect any ancient Jewish or Christian text to do to count as a messiah text and that in no case does he ever disclaim the category of messiahship.” There are those (e.g., F. C. Baur) who posit a “narrow” and ethno-centric Jewish messianism and portray Paul as negating or transcending it. There are also those who contend that, precisely to avoid making any claim requiring Jewish response to his gospel, Paul avoided ascribing messianic significance to Jesus (e.g., Gaston). Then, there is what has been the majority view that, although Paul may well have regarded Jesus as Messiah at some level, this was not an important emphasis in his faith and teaching (e.g., Chester). But Novenson

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7 Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 64-97, esp. 87-97 for his discussion of the category of “honorific.”
8 Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 97.
9 Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 134.
11 Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 137-73 (citing 138). The passages he examines are Gal 3:16; 1 Cor 15:20-28; 2 Cor 1:21-22; Rom 9:1-5; Rom 15:3, 9; 15:7-12; 1 Cor 1:23; 2 Cor 5:16-17; Rom 1:3-4.
builds a strong case that Paul’s “Christ language” should be seen as “a case study in early Jewish messiah language,” and that Jesus’ messianic status and significance form a major factor in Paul’s religious beliefs, and the beliefs of the early circles of believers that are reflected in his letters.

I admit that my appreciation for Novenson’s work is likely conditioned by my perception of it as a more sophisticated articulation, and more thorough defence, of a view that I expressed some years ago.\(^{13}\) As Novenson grants, to take this view of Paul’s christology as having a strong messianic coloring is to depart from what has been the majority or dominant view among NT scholars.\(^{14}\) But there are others as well who have reached a similar conclusion, and Novenson has now given further strong reasons to do so.\(^{15}\) In light of his work especially, I shall not focus here on arguing this point further. Instead, on the now reinforced premise that Jesus’ messianic status was significant for Paul, I wish to turn now to several features of Paul’s messianic christology that make it a noteworthy, even distinctive variant-form of Jewish messianism.\(^{16}\)

**Distinctives of Paul’s Messianic Christology**

In referring to “distinctives of Paul’s christology,” I mean features that distinguish the beliefs and devotional stance reflected in Paul’s letters from other forms of Jewish messianism.\(^{17}\) As

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\(^{13}\) Hurtado, “Paul’s Christology,” esp. 193; *id., Lord Jesus Christ*, 98-101.

\(^{14}\) Perhaps the most vocal exception is N. T. Wright, who has insisted in numerous publications that in all of Paul’s uses of *χριστός* there is an intended and strong messianic claim. But I find more dubious Wright’s accompanying claim that in ancient Jewish thought “Messiah” typically had a strong incorporative sense, “Messiah” seen as Israel’s embodiment. On the basis of this claim, Wright then also contends that in Paul’s thought, as Messiah, Jesus embodied/embodies Israel, and through Jesus and the subsequent gospel, thus, “Israel” is transformed to become all those who are joined to Jesus (effectively, the church). Moreover, more recently, Wright claims that Paul also saw Messiah Jesus as “the embodiment of the returning YHWH.” Among Wright’s publications, see, e.g., *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), esp.18-40, 41-55; and now *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (2 vols; London: SPCK, 2013), 2:690-709, 815-911. I find Wright’s claims problematic, but I cannot (and need not) engage them here.

\(^{15}\) For somewhat similar views, see, e.g., Collins and Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 101-22; Edward Adams, “Paul, Jesus, and Christ,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus*, ed. Delbert Burkett (London: Blackwell, 2011), 94-110 (esp. 98-99); Ben Witherington III, “Christ,” *DPL* 95-100. Likewise, see Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (New York: Knopf, 2000), 125-37, who contends that Paul’s view of Jesus as Messiah was closely connected to Paul’s gentile mission. For a somewhat similar proposal that for Paul Jesus’ messiahship and Gentile salvation were connected, see Matthew V. Novenson, “The Jewish Messiahs, the Pauline Christ, and the Gentile Question,” *JBL* 128 (2009), 357-73.


\(^{17}\) Cf. Witherington, “Christ,” 98, who posited “three elements in [Paul’s] preaching that were without known precedents in early Judaism: (1) Messiah is called God; (2) Messiah is said to have been crucified, and his death is seen as redemptive; (3) Messiah is expected to come to earth again.” It is unclear, however, that Paul called Jesus “God,” and the following discussion will show additional features that are noteworthy and even distinctive.
indicated already, contrary to some other scholars, I do not present Paul’s christology over against a monolithic Jewish messianism, but instead as a distinctive variant-form of a diverse Jewish messianism of his time.  

One further preliminary note: Pauline scholars have frequently portrayed him as a massively creative figure (e.g., the first Christian theologian). I do not deny that there seem to be some distinctive and creative features in Paul’s beliefs, and that he was impressive in articulating them. Moreover, he certainly appears to have had a distinctive vision of God’s redemptive programme, and his own particular calling by God to obtain “the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles” (Rom 1:5) as a key component in that programme. But I tend to think that in a number of other matters, including christological beliefs and related devotional practices in particular, Paul reflected (and intentionally so) a religious stance that he shared with other believers, and, unlike the professional theologian, did not really devote himself to producing some distinctive programme of Christian doctrine. In any case, as indicated already, my primary concern here is to treat certain features of the messianic thought affirmed and advocated by Paul (i.e., what he shared with other early Christian circles) as reflecting a novel and distinctive development in the context of the diversity of second-temple Jewish messianism.

**Messiah’s Death and Resurrection**

It will scarcely require supporting argumentation to note that Jesus’ death and resurrection are emphases central in Paul’s statements of faith (e.g., Rom 4:24-25), in his own preaching (e.g., 1 Cor 2:1-5; Gal 3:1), and in the traditions that he says he received and shared in (e.g., 1 Cor 15:1-7). Paul refers to Jesus’ death variously, e.g., as expressing Jesus’ obedience to God (e.g., Philip 2:6-8), Jesus’ love (e.g., 2 Cor 5:14-15), and God’s redemptive purpose (e.g., Rom 8:31-39), and as the model to be actuated in the behaviour of believers (e.g., Rom 6:1-11). Likewise, Jesus’ resurrection and exaltation to heavenly glory is the decisive act of God that bestowed on Jesus a unique status now as “Kyrios,” as “the Son of

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18 “In light of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we can now speak of a revival of messianic expectation in Judaism in the Hamonean and Herodian periods,” Collins and Collins, *King and Messiah*, 63.

19 For treatments of Paul that (over?) emphasize his theological creativity and uniqueness in early Christianity, see, e.g., J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), “Paul was the first and greatest Christian theologian” (2); and still more so Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Cf., however, the classic (and now under-appreciated) study by Archibald M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961); and my discussion of “Early Pauline Christianity” in *Lord Jesus Christ* (79-153), in which I focus on “beliefs about Jesus that were broadly characteristic of Pauline churches,” rather than on “Paul as a theologian” (98).

20 As seems to have been noted among Paul’s original readers, who characterized his letters as “weighty and strong” (2 Cor 10:10).
God,” and as universal ruler (e.g., Philip 2:9-11; Rom 1:3-4; 1 Cor 15:20-28). So, these divine actions also serve as the assurance of, and the pattern for, the eschatological (bodily) redemption of believers (e.g., Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:42-49; Philip 3:21). Obviously, much more could be said, but it is surely unnecessary to argue further the basic point that in Paul’s beliefs Jesus’ death and resurrection were hugely important and were thematized in various ways.

Moreover, as Kramer noted decades ago, in Paul’s numerous references to Jesus’ death and resurrection (as also in other NT writings) the appellative “Christ” is particularly prominent (e.g., 1 Cor 8:11; 15:3; Rom 5:6, 8; 14:15).21 This seems to reflect an emphasis on Jesus’ death and resurrection as messianic acts/events, an emphasis that likely originated in circles of Aramaic-speaking and Greek-speaking Jews and was then echoed and applied by Paul.22 This emphasis on Jesus’ death and resurrection is what other scholars also often cite as a/the distinctive feature of the messianism affirmed by Paul: The claim that the Messiah had been crucified and then God had raised him from death.

Paula Fredriksen, for example, refers to this claim as “one glaring oddity” in the early “messianic movement” comprised by followers of Jesus.23 She notes (rightly) that “a crucified messiah was evidently not inconceivable: Jews [the early Jewish believers] could and did conceive it.” But she judges that the early proclamation of the crucified and resurrected Messiah-Jesus did not succeed with most first-century Jews, because “A messiah, crucified or otherwise, was not a messiah in the eyes of Jewish tradition if after his coming the world continued as before.”24 That is to say that for many/most Jews of Paul’s time,

21 Kramer, Christ, Lord, Son of God, 19-38 (citing 35). Kramer sought to identify “pre-Pauline” confessional formulae, with some success in my view. But I also find his tradition-critical analysis faulty at a number of points that need not be discussed here.

22 See, e.g., my discussion of “Judean Christian Traditions in Paul’s Letters” in Lord Jesus Christ, 167-76.

23 Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christ, 142. Note also her statement, “But for one necessary adjustment in their preaching—explaining why the messiah had been crucified—nothing that the early apostles claimed about Jesus would have been foreign to other Jews” (153). As will be clear from the following discussion, I do not see the emphasis on Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection as the only distinctive, or the most offensive, feature of the earliest Jesus-movement to other Jews of the first century CE.

24 Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christ, 167-68. She also contends that so long as the church remained predominantly Jewish, Gentile adherents were not a problem for Jews, but “as it became more and more Gentile, it compromised its identity as a renewal movement within Judaism, and hence its chances for success among Jews” (168). It is not clear to me, however, that a “disproportion of Gentiles to Jews” in early Christian circles developed early enough to account for the “hardening” against the gospel that Paul complained about already in Romans 9-11 (56-57 CE). Cf. W. D. Davies, The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 369-70 (cited approvingly by Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christ, 173 n. 75), who claimed that Gentiles became the majority “at a very early date.” But Jewish believers likely remained dominant, at least as leaders, all across at least the first several decades of the Jesus-movement. In any case, I rather suspect that there were other factors in the Jewish large-scale negative response to earliest Christianity. See L. W. Hurtado, How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical
Jesus was a failed messiah, his crucifixion “a stumbling block” (1 Cor 1:23) that contradicted any messianic claim.

John Collins posits that early christological claims “departed decisively from the Jewish paradigms in many respects,” likewise citing as one important such departure the “notion that the messiah should suffer and die.”\(^{25}\) The term “departed” may, however, be a bit retrospective and anachronistic for the early decades of the Jewish Jesus-movement and the time of the Pauline mission. Certainly, it appears that the claim that Jesus’ crucifixion was an integral (even divinely ordained) part of his messianic role was without precedent or analogy in the known versions of second-temple messianism, and so was a genuinely innovative notion that also entailed novel readings of biblical texts (e.g., Pss 16; 22; 69; 116). But, to repeat Fredriksen’s observation, it was a notion that emerged initially in circles of Aramaic-speaking and Greek-speaking Jews, and in the Jewish homeland.

Furthermore, these earliest Jewish believers did not withdraw from their ethnic ties, or, so far as we can see, understand their messianic claims about Jesus as a “departure” from their ancestral faith. Instead, they engaged fellow Jews declaring their novel messianic claims in the hope of securing acceptance of these claims as reflecting the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological/messianic hopes. That these earliest Jewish believers may have met with only limited success in the early decades, and that their claims eventually came to be regarded as a Jewish heresy, should not obscure the recognition that their messianic faith (admittedly peculiar in that context) commenced as what we may term a novel variant-form of Jewish messianism.

For the purposes of this paper, I underscore that this view of their message also characterizes Paul’s messianic christology. Fully recognizing that the proclamation of the crucified Jesus was a difficult “sell” to many/most Jews, Paul nevertheless continued to hold that this message is the authentic manifestation of God’s redemptive purposes (Rom 3:21-26), and that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel (Rom 9:1-5) in whom the Torah finds its eschatological consummation (its τέλος; Rom 10:4).

**Interval and Parousia**

In early Christian teaching reflected in Paul, Messiah’s death and resurrection entailed another distinctive feature, an interval between these events and the future consummation of

God’s redemptive programme, in which Jesus’ return in glory (παρουσία) was central. The interval between Jesus’ resurrection and parousia is itself endowed with special significance as the time for proclamation of the gospel, whether to Jews or, especially in Paul’s case, to Gentiles, making it the time of salvation and giving it a strong eschatological significance. The resulting scheme, in which the Messiah appears and is divinely confirmed (Jesus’ resurrection), followed by this interval in which the message focused on his identity and significance is proclaimed, culminating in his return (parousia) and attendant events that comprise the consummation of God’s redemptive purposes (e.g., resurrection of the elect), seems to be another novel and unprecedented feature of early Christian messianism.

*A Cosmic Dimension*

A third noteworthy feature of Paul’s messianic christology is the cosmic dimension to Jesus’ exaltation and appointed rule. To be sure, among the other various forms of Jewish messianism, there were expectations of a universal dimension to Messiah’s rule. For example, the royal Messiah of Psalms of Solomon will redeem Israel and will also exercise sovereignty over all the nations to the ends of the earth (17:30-31).

Of course, various biblical texts posited a world-wide supremacy/sovereignty for the Davidic monarch of Judea (e.g., Psa 2:7-11), and Paul also seems to have read Psalm 8 as prefiguring the Messiah, citing particularly the reference in this psalm to God putting “all things” in subjection to him (1 Cor 15:25-28, citing Psa 8:6). But in Paul’s description of Jesus’ exaltation and sovereignty they extend beyond world-wide to encompass all other dimensions as well. Note that in 1 Corinthians 15:25-28 Paul even includes death as one of the enemies to be subjugated to Christ and destroyed (v. 26). In the oft-studied passage widely thought to derive from an early Christian ode, Philippians 2:6-11, Jesus is given “the name above every name,” and is to be acclaimed by every being “in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (vv. 10-11). This is by no means peculiar to Paul, but is reflected in other NT texts as well, Jesus’ supremacy over heavenly powers especially cited (e.g., 1 Pet 3:22; Heb 1:3-14).

We may come close to an analogy in the messianic figure of the Parables of Enoch who will exercise supremacy over kings and their kingdoms worldwide (1 Enoch 46; 48:4-6,8-10; 52:6-9; 62:3-12), and will even judge “Azazel and all his associates and all his host”

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26 E.g., 1 Cor 15:23. In other Pauline texts, Paul refers to the parousia of “the/our Lord Jesus” (e.g., 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 5:23), “the Lord” (1 Thess 4:15). Other NT writings as well reflect this use of parousia (e.g., 2 Thess 2:1; James 5:7-8; 2 Pet 3:4; 1 John 2:28; Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39). Cf. also Paul’s use of the term to refer to the return of Titus (2 Cor 7:6-7) and his own “(bodily) presence” (2 Cor 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12). Collins has noted this distinctive also (Scepter and the Star, 209).
In another *Parables* text the enthroned Chosen One even appears to judge “all the works of the holy ones in the heights of heaven” (61:8). In any event, the form of messianism reflected in Paul seems more encompassing, more truly universal on a cosmic scale than at least some other forms, with all dimensions of reality to be subjected to Jesus.

We should also note that Jesus’ messianic supremacy is redemptive, not only for Israel but for the nations as well. Whereas, in some forms of Jewish messianism Messiah subdues the nations, and may even inflict punishment upon them, in the vision we have reflected in Paul Jesus redeems Gentiles as well as Israel, enfranchising Gentiles into the Abrahamic family (e.g., Gal 3:25-29).

*An Affective Emphasis*

Still another striking feature of Paul’s messianic christology, and one that is curiously not commented on very frequently, is its strong affective tone. That is, Paul’s christological discourse is characterized by a striking intensity in expressing his relationship to Christ, and the relationship of believers to Christ as well. For example, there is Paul’s reference to his having been “crucified with Christ,” and to his continuing life as one of entrusting himself to “the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).27 Or consider his passionately worded autobiographical passage in Philippians, where he declares the supreme importance of “knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,” and posits his single-minded aim “to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings” (Philip 3:7-11). Or note his statement of being motivated strongly by “the love of Christ,” whose redemptive death for all now should generate an answering life-commitment to Christ (2 Cor 5:14-15).28

In other statements, Paul also refers to God’s love, connecting it strongly with Christ, as in Romans 8:39, declaring that nothing in all creation “can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”29 Indeed, there are several references to God’s love (typically for believers) in Paul’s letters (e.g., Rom 5:5, 8; 2 Cor 13:11, 14; and in the NT more widely), and also references to loving God (e.g., Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9). This is not typical of religious discourse generally in the Roman religious environment, and so may well

27 I take the ἐν πίστει ξῶ as Paul’s reference to entrusting himself to Christ. But note the interesting textual variant, ἐν πίστει . . . τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ, supported by 𝔓46 B D* F G and a few other witnesses. In either reading, however, there is a strong note of close relationship of Paul and Christ.

28 I take “anyone who does not live the Lord” in 1 Cor 16:22 also as referring love for Christ as the rightful stance of believers.

29 In the similar assurance in Rom 8:35, most witnesses refer to τῆς ἐγκαίνης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, but several witnesses (including Σ) have τῆς ἐγκαίνης τοῦ θεοῦ. Vaticanus’ reading, τῆς ἐγκαίνης τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, seems an obvious harmonization with the wording in 8:39.
reflect a kind of discourse that Paul inherited from his biblical tradition, which features references to YHWH’s love for Israel, and Israel’s love for YHWH.  

But, to underscore my point here, Paul’s emphasis on the love of Christ and the strongly affective tone in Paul’s references to his relationship to Christ as well, are, to my knowledge, without precedent or analogy in other forms of second-temple Jewish messianic discourse. One factor helping to account for this might be that Paul’s messianic figure is a real, known person of then-living memory, whereas most other types of ancient Jewish messianism projected some future, as yet unidentified, figure.  

Moreover, as noted, the closest analogy is in the biblical-tradition discourse about God’s love and loving God in return, and the expressions of intense devotion found especially often in the Psalms. Perhaps, also, this discourse-tradition was another factor. We could say that Paul’s religious discourse reflects a kind of incorporation of Jesus into this tradition, perhaps giving us one of a number of expressions of what we may term a “dyadic” pattern, in which Jesus is linked with God uniquely and intimately in early Christian belief and devotional/worship practice (more on the latter in due course). Whatever the factors to invoke, my emphasis here is that this affective tone to Paul’s discourse about Jesus is remarkable.

**Incorporation in/into Messiah**

This affective discourse concerning Jesus seems to be related to the way that Paul refers to the incorporative relationship of believers to Jesus/Christ, which has been labelled variously by scholars as, e.g., “union with Christ,” or “Christ-mysticism,” or “participation in Christ.” The most well-known, and oft-studied, Pauline expression of this is the ἐν Χριστῷ construction frequent in Paul’s letters (56 times in the seven “undisputed” letters). In

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30 YHWH’s love for Israel (e.g., Isa 54:8; Jer 31:3; Zeph 3:17; and other texts such as the memorable lines in Isa 49:15-18). Israel’s (or devout individual’s) love for YHWH (e.g., Deut 6:5; 10:12; 11:1; 30:6; Psa 18:1; 31:23).  
31 But, of course, Paul’s affective tone cannot have derived from association with Jesus prior to his execution.  
33 The most recent study of this topic known to me is Constantine R. Campbell, Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), which offers an analysis of Paul’s various expressions: ἐν Χριστῷ, εἰς Χριστόν, σὺν Χριστῷ, διὰ Χριστοῦ. But he does not distinguish between the undisputed letters and those widely regarded as “deutero-Pauline.”  
34 This figure does not include the uses of “in him/whom” or the numerous instances of ἐν χωρίῳ (35 of the latter alone in the seven undisputed letters). The latter expression is used some 24 times in the LXX, all of these, of course, referring to YHWH.
addition, there are related expressions that are often used with reference to believers vis-à-vis Jesus: εἰς Χριστόν, σὺν Χριστῷ, διὰ Χριστοῦ, and also ἐν Κυρίῳ.

In the history of scholarship, prompted initially by Deissmann’s 1892 treatise, scholars made various attempts to determine what Paul’s references to believers being “in Christ” meant and what relationship Paul’s so-called “mysticism” may have had to its religious environment. Near the end of the twentieth century, however, Dunn judged that scholarly interest in the subject had “faded” and that the topic had become a “back number” in Pauline studies. It is neither possible nor necessary here to engage the intricacies of that scholarly debate, much less to expound in any adequate manner Paul’s discourse about believers as intimately in relationship to Christ. Instead, I simply wish to highlight the integral place occupied by this discourse in Paul’s messianic christology, and note that this is another distinctive feature of it in comparison to other strands of second-temple messianism.

Although much more attention historically has been given to the place and meaning of “justification,” this emphasis on believers as incorporated in/into Christ is actually very important in Paul’s theological discourse. Dunn judged it “much more pervasive in [Paul’s] writings than his talk of ‘God’s righteousness,’” and Dunn also contended that “study of participation in Christ leads more directly into the rest of Paul’s theology than justification.” Indeed, to cite Dunn one further time, he proposed that, as “a fundamental aspect of his thought and speech,” Paul’s frequent references to being “in Christ/in the Lord” reflect his view that the life of believers, “its source, its identity, and its responsibilities, could be summed up in these phrases.”

But we must also note that this centrality of Christ was not at all at the expense of God in Paul’s religious thought and practice (nor in other NT writings either). On the one hand, the key distinguishing feature of discourse about God in Paul (and the NT generally) is the prominent place of Jesus. Jesus is “the one by whom believers typically identify themselves, and in their collective devotional practices he is explicit and central” in a degree

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36 Dunn, Theology, 391, 395. Cf., e.g., some 50 uses of δικαιοσύνη in the seven undisputed Paulines, 34 of these uses in Romans.

37 Dunn, Theology, 399.
and manner that is remarkable and even distinctive. On the other hand, “in all the various presentations of Jesus’ significance, ‘God’ holds the overarching and crucial place.” For Paul, we may say, if adequate discourse about God now requires reference to Jesus, it is also the case that Jesus’ significance is expressed consistently with reference to God.

So, Paul’s emphasis on believers as “in Christ,” in a powerful relationship with Christ, sits comfortably within a larger vision of God’s overarching supremacy. Paul also saw Christ as appointed by God as “the Son of God” (the definite article consistently used) and the “Lord” (e.g., Rom 1:3-4; Philip 2:9-11), and so the close relationship with Christ that Paul described and urged was for him the divinely-willed mode by which believers were to enter obediently into God’s redemptive purposes. Nevertheless, this centrality of Jesus, in particular this notion of believers being “in Christ,” seems to be another distinguishing mark of the messianic christology affirmed by Paul in the context of other forms of Jewish messianism.

Devotional Practices

I turn now, finally, to note another distinctive of Paul’s view of Christ. Indeed, to my mind, this is the most striking and distinctive feature of the religious stance reflected in Paul’s letters: The exalted Jesus is programmatically treated as rightful recipient of devotional practice (including corporate worship) along with God. Having written on this topic repeatedly over some twenty-five years, I shall (and must) treat a selection of the data only briefly here. As in my previous publications, to avoid abstractions I focus on specifics of devotional practice, especially those that appear to be features of corporate worship.

38 Hurtado, God in New Testament Theology, 53.
39 I have discussion Paul’s references to Jesus as God’s Son (infrequent, but very important in his discourse) elsewhere: “Son of God,” DPL 900-906; and “Jesus’ Divine Sonship in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans,” in Romans and the People of God, ed. Sven K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 217-33.
40 Collins (Scepter and the Star, 208) posited, “the most significant Christian departure from Jewish notions of the messiah was the affirmation of the divinity of Christ,” comprising “claims” that “eventually went beyond anything we find in the Jewish texts” (209, emphasis mine). I register two points in response: First, Collins’ phrase, “affirmation of the divinity of Christ,” is insufficiently clear or precise as to what is meant. It is difficult to tell the force of rhetoric in ancient texts. Angels can be referred to as “gods,” and the mysterious Melchizedek can be identified as the Elohim of Psa 82:1 (11QMelch). The really innovative development in earliest Christian circles, and the far more significant one in its historical context, was the “dyadic” devotional pattern exhibited in a whole constellation of practices. Second, though remarkable and novel, earliest Jewish believers (including Paul) did not apparently intend their Jesus-devotion as a “departure” from their Jewish religious matrix.
In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul’s characterization of believers “in every place” is “all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The phrasing, τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ἄνωμα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, is obviously an adaptation of a biblical expression used often to describe cultic invocation or worship of YHWH.42 We can only presume that Paul used this expression in full knowledge of this, and that he refers to some equivalent action of cultic acclamation of “our Lord Jesus Christ.” Indeed, to underscore this point, it is this cultic action that he refers to here as itself the sufficient and common description of believers.

In Romans 10:9-13 we likely have another reference to this cultic acclamation of, and ritualized reverence for, the exalted Jesus. Here, he refers to uttering the verbal confession, “κύριον Ἰησοῦν” (v. 9), and only a few statements later refers to “calling upon” him (ἐπικαλούμενος, v. 12); then Paul directly quotes the statement from LXX Joel 3:5 (MT 2:32), “whoever calls upon [ἐπικαλέσῃται] the name of the Lord shall be saved” (v. 13).43 In this reference to the ritual invocation/acclamation of Jesus, Paul uses a biblical statement that originally referred to the cultic invocation/worship of YHWH.

This cultic acclamation of Jesus also seems to be alluded to in 1 Corinthians 12:3, and probably in Philippians 2:9-11 as well, the latter text part of what is widely thought to derive from an early Christian ode used in worship.44 The “maranatha” in 1 Corinthians 16:22 is now commonly taken as evidence that a similar cultic acclamation/invocation of Jesus featured also in Aramaic-speaking circles of Jewish believers as well as in Pauline congregations.45

In addition to cultic acclamation/invocation of Jesus and odes celebrating him chanted in worship, there is the place of Jesus in the corporate meal of the ekklēsia. Paul refers to it as “the Lord’s supper” (κυριακὸν δεῖπνον, 1 Cor 11:20), the risen Christ rather obviously the

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42 To “call upon the name of the Lord” (e.g., Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; cf. 1 Kings 18:24-26; Psa 116[LXX 114]:4, 13[LXX 115:4]); “call upon the Lord” (e.g., 1 Sam 12:17; Psa 17[LXX]:4); “call upon your [YHWH’s] name” (e.g., Psa 74[LXX]:2); the reference to Moses and Aaron in Psa 98[LXX]:6-7; and the cultic invitation to “call on me [YHWH]” in Psa 49[LXX]: 14-15. Note also, e.g., this phrasing in Pss.Sol. 6:1-2.

43 Carl J. Davis, The Name and Way of the Lord, JSNTSup 129 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1996), discusses the early Christian appropriation of the Joel text.

44 This view of Philip 2:5-11 originated with Ernst Lohmeyer, Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung zu Phil. 2, 5-11 (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1928), and has now obtained wide endorsement. Among more recent comments, see Andrew Chester, “High Christology—Whence, When and Why?” Early Christianity 2 (2011), 22-50, esp. 39-43. On the importance of odes/hymns as expressions of Jesus-devotion, see, e.g., Martin Hengel, “The Song About Christ in Earliest Worship,” in Studies in Early Christology (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 227-91.

45 Wilhelm Bousset’s attempts to side-step the force of 1 Cor 16:22 did not prove persuasive. I review the matter briefly in my Introduction to the 2013 reprint of Bousset’s Kyrios Christos, xii-xiii.
Lord in question. Indeed, Paul draws a direct comparison with the cult-meals devoted to various Roman-era deities (1 Cor 10:14-22). Although we should allow for variations in the specific ways that earliest Christian circles may have understood their common meals, it seems clear that in all extant references Jesus was central in one way or another, whether as the cult-host of the meal, or in his messianic/redemptive work.46

Paul’s references to prayers include striking instances where Jesus is co-recipient, as in 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13, where God and “our Lord Jesus” are implored jointly on behalf of the Thessalonian believers.47 Also, Paul’s typical letter-salutations mentioning both God and Jesus (e.g., 1 Thess 1:1; Philip 1:2; Gal 1:3; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2), which are sometimes referred to as “wish prayers” and which may well derive from liturgical formulae, likewise reflect a striking duality or dyadic devotional stance, in which God and Jesus are effectively linked as sources of the “grace and peace” invoked upon recipients. Paul’s equally well-known “grace benedictions,” which also may well reflect early liturgical expressions/practice, further demonstrate the remarkable place of the risen Jesus in the religious life that Paul affirms (e.g., 1 Cor 16:23; Gal 6:18; 1 Thess 5:28). Moreover, in 2 Corinthians 12:8-9, Paul refers to his repeated petitions made directly to “the Lord” (who in this context must be Jesus) to remove “a thorn in the flesh.”48

To cite yet one more item making up the remarkable constellation of devotional actions, the entrance rite for the early circles of believers, baptism, appears typically to have been performed “in/into the name” of Jesus (e.g., alluded to in 1 Cor 6:11). Lars Hartman has shown that this likely involved a ritual invocation of Jesus’ name over (and/or by) the candidates, signifying that they were now made the property of Jesus.49 It also posits Jesus as the basis of eschatological salvation.

I trust that these examples will suffice to make the basic point that in Paul’s letters we have a remarkable devotional pattern in which Jesus functions prominently along with God, and that this is apparently unique in the context of second-temple Jewish religion and other forms of Jewish messianism. Granted, in contexts of worship, the key title Paul applies to

46 Even in Didache, Jesus is the occasion for and content of the εὐχαριστία given to God (Did 9:1–10:6)
47 Other examples of similar “wish-prayers” in Paul’s letters include Rom 15:5, 13, 33 (in which God alone is invoked). Although scholars remain divided on the question of its authorship, there also examples in 2 Thessalonians (2:16-17, God and Jesus; and 3:5, apparently “the Lord” here is Jesus).
Jesus is (ὁ) Κύριος. But, to repeat the point, in Paul’s letters the one confessed and invoked as Κύριος is also accorded the honorific Χριστός, and is the descendent of David and the one whose death and resurrection confirms his messianic status. For Paul, Jesus’ status as Κύριος does not conflict with or relativize his messianic role but, instead, expresses its particularly exalted nature.

**Conclusion**

In the foregoing discussion I have itemized several key features of the christology and devotional stance reflected in Paul’s letters that are noteworthy individually and that collectively comprise an apparently novel development in second-temple Jewish religion. To my mind, the most striking of these features is the prominence of the exalted Christ in early Christian devotional practices, the “dyadic” devotional pattern that we have noted.

Perhaps the closest we get to analogous figures are the mysterious Melchizedek (referred to in a few fragmentary Qumran texts, esp. 11QMelchizedek) and the messianic figure in the Parables of Enoch. But the Melchizedek figure seems to be a high angel projected as acting in the eschatological future essentially as field-marshall in the triumph of God’s purposes on earth. It is not entirely clear that he should be thought of as a messiah, or how he relates to the messianic expectations found in other Qumran texts. Moreover, he does not seem to play a role in the actual religious life of Qumran or any other circle of second-temple Jews, and he appears more to be what we can term a figure of eschatological dreams.

“The Chosen One” (a.k.a. “Righteous One,” “Anointed One,” “that Son of Man”) of the Parables of Enoch is clearly a messianic figure, combining several biblical influences, and (as noted earlier) even transcendent qualities. Chosen and named before the creation of the world (1 Enoch 48:2-3, 6), in some future day he will be revealed and enthroned and will...

52 See, e.g., my discussion of various “principal angel” figures in *One God, One Lord*, 71-92, including Michael (75-78) and Melchizedek of Qumran texts (78-79).
53 See now the detailed Excursus in George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37-82* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 113-23, esp. 118-19, noting the “composite” nature of this figure. They judge, however, that “in the Parables, with the exception of 71:14 . . . the figure is not human but transcendent” (115). Likewise, Erik Sjöberg, *Der Menschensohn im äthiopischen Henochbuch* (Lund: Gleerup, 1946) took the figure as “ein himmlisches Wesen” (58), and Collins (*Scepter and the Star*, 208): “If he is not divine, he is clearly more than human.”
execute God’s judgement, even over “Azazel and all his associates and all his host” (55:4) and other heavenly beings (61:8-9), as well as all the unrighteous people of the earth (62:3-9; 69:26-29).

There surely are interesting similarities between this messianic figure of the Parables and the portrayal of Jesus in the Paul and other NT writings, e.g., both figures show the combined appropriation of various biblical traditions (e.g., the Davidic Messiah, the “son of man” figure of Daniel 7, the Servant figure of Deutero-Isaiah, and personified Wisdom). But we should not ignore the noteworthy differences. As with the Melchizedek of Qumran, the messianic figure in the Parables is a projection of eschatological hopes and dreams, or perhaps we should say a product of fervent exegesis of biblical texts, a figure who is yet to be revealed. For Paul, however, the Messiah who has been made ὁ Κύριος is Jesus, “born of a woman, born under the Law” (Gal 4:4) a real and recent human figure to whom Paul ascribes extraordinary status and roles (e.g., as agent of creation in 1 Cor 8:4-6).

Moreover (and most significant in my view), we have no evidence or reason to presume that there were Jewish circles in which the Chosen One of the Parables functioned in devotional practices comparably to the ways that Jesus did in the early ekklēsias. There is no indication of an equivalent “dyadic” devotional pattern, no programmatic “mutation” in devotional practices/life such as we see reflected (indeed, presumed) in Paul’s letters. Note that throughout the Parables, it is the name of “the Lord of Spirits” (God) that is to be praised (e.g., 39:7, 9-11), and through which prayer and intercession is offered (e.g., 40:6; 45:3). Sinners are those who “deny the name of the Lord of Spirits” (e.g., 41:2; 45:1-2; 46:7; 48:10), and the righteous believe in, depend upon, and praise “the name of the Lord of Spirits” (e.g., 44:4; 46:8; 47:2; 61:11). In this (God’s) same name they are saved (48:7; 50:3) and will be

54 Cf. James A. Waddell, The Messiah: A Comparative Study of the Enochic Son of Man and the Pauline Kyrios (London: T&T Clark, 2011), who characterized as “bias” my observation that the references to the Chosen One in the Parables comprise “literary phenomena” (8).

55 I consider Waddell’s claim that “the ‘explosion’ of early devotion to Jesus that Hurtado insists upon is really an echo of Enoch devotion to the Son of Man” (The Messiah, 10) to be a serious misjudgement. I also Waddell’s extended discussion of my views (8-13) as seriously distorting and so his attempts at refutation wide of the mark.

blessed (53:6; 58:4); and it is typically God alone to whom cultic worship is given in various scenes (e.g., 63:1-7; 69:22-24).

Neither Qumran nor the Parables explain or account for the distinctive variant-form of messianism that we see affirmed by Paul, or made it inevitable. Moreover, there seems to me scant evidence to posit some direct influence or borrowing from any one of these upon any other. Instead, the Melchizedek of Qumran and the Chosen One of the Parables offer additional and independent illustrations of the variegated nature of Jewish messianism in the early first century CE, in which Paul’s messianic christology comprises another distinctive, and (in my view) even more remarkable, variant-form.

In 48:5, all peoples “will fall down and worship before him,” but they “will glorify and bless and sing hymns to the name of the Lord of Spirits.” I.e., it looks as if the Chosen One, acting as God’s representative, is the convener of this worship, but not its recipient. In 62:5-6, “the kings and mighty and all who possess the land will bless and glorify and exalt him who rules over all,” which must refer to “that Son of Man” (the Chosen One). But this looks more like a scene of obeisance of the conquered to the conqueror than cultic worship. Were it the latter, we should expect to see the reverence given by the righteous.

Cf. in particular Waddell, The Messiah.

Indeed, the historical value of such phenomena as Melchizedek and the Chosen One of the Parables is enhanced if they and the early christology that we see in Paul are all essentially independent developments. For thereby they all provide multiple examples of the innovations that could take place.

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