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# THE EVOLUTION OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THE FOUR GOSPELS



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## **The Evolution of Christian Theology in The Four Gospels**

### **Synopsis:**

The purpose of the present research is to analyze the linguistic evolution of The Four Gospels by their chronological order of composition in favor of deifying Jesus Christ.

## The Evolution of Christian Theology in The Four Gospels

**Abstract:** This analysis is a detailed exploration of the apotheosis of Jesus in the hands of the evangelists who wrote the four canonical Gospels of the Christian Church. We will compare the Four Gospels by their chronological order of composition to analyze the doctrinal evolution of Christology from a linguistic perspective.

### Contents

Introduction .....	2
Approach .....	4
Characteristics of Divinity .....	7
Jesus the Master Teacher as the Lord of the Universe .....	9
Jesus as son of God.....	21
Worship of Jesus.....	28
Who forgives sins, Jesus or God?.....	34
The birth of Jesus.....	37
Master Jesus, a Jew who worships Yahweh .....	48
Conclusions .....	54
Bibliography .....	55

# **The Evolution of Christian Theology in the Four Gospels**

## **Introduction**

The principal focus of research in the field of world religions in the last few decades has centered on the verification of the historicity of the accounts mentioned in the holy books. Many theologians, despite new archaeological discoveries and modern perspectives of scientific interpretation, have had to adapt and continue to adapt their religious teachings to new information discovered and, in this way, have been able to maintain a balance between faith and reason, which is the essential combination for the survival of their religions.

In our study, we will focus on the special case of Christianity, a subject that is has been rising in popularity—mainly in American university classrooms— with the works of scholars such as John P. Meier, Bart D. Ehrman, Reza Aslan and others. In addition, in the Spanish-speaking world, we have Antonio Piñero, who is at the head of these modern currents and is on the same level as the previously-mentioned North Americans. Piñero, without a doubt, brings immense knowledge to the latest research.

The 19th century witnessed the birth of an external criticism of religion which began to question church dogmas from a secular point of view. In the 20th century, academic research into religion matured, especially during the period between the First and Second World Wars. In the last several decades, with the digitalization of historical documents and the ease of access available to researchers, advances in research have increased dramatically. Obviously many theories that have been explained and are still being explained have facilitated new focuses that will continue to change the interpretation of Christianity, a religion with 2,000 years of history. In my case, I have had the honor of presenting my research to Dr. Piñero during my graduate studies. Without a doubt, as I have mentioned, with his dozens of of books, tens of features, interviews in the media, and many other published articles, he has already made history with his research on Christianity, and his work will continue to be used in the future process of modernization of Christian theology in our time.

With the discovery of different types of Christian theology that have been discredited throughout history, we well know that there are principally two Christ figures that are in constant dispute: the theological Jesus versus historical Jesus. Information on the former is taken from the ecclesiastic monopoly and the latter has begun to gain prominence in the academic sphere in the last two centuries. Research on the historical Jesus has been advancing at an unstoppable speed in the last decade and it is not possible to predict where it could lead.

Another well-known fact is that today's Jesus theology, or should I say, Christology, had its origins not in Jesus' teachings but in Paul's interpretation of Jesus and his mission; for example, it suffices to mention the Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon. Especially in the latter, the human Jesus was definitively sentenced to death until today. However, Jesus has recently been resurrected and has started to take centre stage.

The focus of our investigation will not consist of decisions made in the Councils but in trying to carry out a detailed analysis of the theologies, explained in the Gospels that have led to the proclamation of such decisions. This methodology will question the historicity of the information found in the holy books and will allow us to reach some conclusions that, in my opinion, could have positive consequences for the development of current Christian theology. We will do all this within the historic and academic framework, with a very neutral tone and without the slightest intention of showing hostility towards any particular religious institution, and always with the good intention of obtaining ever purer information. One must not forget that institutions exist for the individual and not the other way around. Individuals should not have to adapt themselves to the pre-established ideologies of institutions; the institutions should be flexible enough to respond to the needs of the community of each era. Therefore, theologians of religion should not be afraid of today's anthropologists of religion when they discover new information. This will help with the task of placing faith within a logical framework. When one door closes, another opens.

## Approach

The approach of our study is to respond to the following questions: What do the Gospels tell us? How many parallel theologies are set out in them? Is there a theological evolution within the canonical books?

Our incentive and drive to see these questions through and find answers is based on the fact that—as Antonio Piñero and almost all scholars indicate —, the order and dates of composition of the Gospels was first the Gospel of Mark around 70 A.D., Matthew around 80 A.D., Luke around 90 A.D. and John around 100 to 150 A.D.<sup>1</sup> These Gospels, in the words of Piñero, are *the reinterpretation, the rethinking* of the life of Jesus and his doctrine. This generates a key concern in us: Did the Christological theologies that constitute the central nucleus of Christianity evolve throughout the Gospels? If we answer our first question in the affirmative, the second question would be: Could there be other secondary theologies that have likewise undergone an evolution before they arrived at their final version?

All theologians, scholars, and critics are in agreement with the idea that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke—principally called the Synoptic Gospels—give us historical information within a theology that is a presentation plan of the facts.<sup>2</sup> It is even known that, depending on the point of view of the Evangelists, the true stories of Jesus are mixed with historification as if they were authentic information. With this in mind, it can be stated with certainty that not all the accounts of the New Testament can be considered historical fact.<sup>3</sup> It is for this reason that, in the last century, so many academic studies have been carried out on the topic with the intent of identifying which stories are theological and which ones are real. Obviously, we begin with the assumption that Jesus existed as a real person in history. Accordingly, as the secular researcher Ehrman has indicated, we should mention that nearly all modern scholars of antiquity, whether they be Christian or not, agree that the Nazarene really lived in our world.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to Harnack, the Gospel of Mark was composed between the years 65 and 70, Matthew 70 and 75, Luke 79-93 and John 80-110. According to Kümmel, Mark was written in the year 70, Matthew between 80 and 100, Luke 70-90 and John 90-100. (Robinson, 1977, 7). Although different opinions exist, it can be unanimously concluded that the Gospel of Mark was the first Gospel written (Pikaza, 2013, 43).

<sup>2</sup> Xavier Pikaza, *Historia de Jesús* (Navarra: Verbo Divino, 2013), 65

<sup>3</sup> E. Parish Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Bart Ehrman, *Forged: Writing in the Name of God* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 285.

Our methodology will consist of briefly explaining what the distinct existing theologies are in the Gospels and how they evolved *with the writings of each* Evangelist. The principal theologies developed in the Gospels are the following: Jesus as Lord, Jesus as the Son of God, Jesus as the Messiah, Son of David, Jesus as the forgiver of sins, and Jesus as he who paid the price for the sins of humanity with his death on the cross and his resurrection on the third day. We, in our analysis, do not address these last two points and we will defer them for our next research project.<sup>5</sup> For now we principally focus on the point first mentioned.

Next, we will explain the most important theologies of Christianity and examine them. We will also provide examples in order to determine whether any modification on the part of Evangelists truly existed. If we observe any such evolution, we should ask ourselves if these changes were innocent modifications or a well-thought-out plan with a theological objective.

*What is the science that studies the theology of the Gospels called and what are its research areas?*

The science that studies the theology of the Gospels is called Christology. Before beginning to analyze Biblical texts, we will briefly explain the meaning of this science. Christology basically addresses the belief that Jesus Christ is the true Son of God, in the sense that he shares divine essence with God the Father, and that both Jesus and God along with the Holy Spirit create the union of the Holy Trinity.<sup>6</sup>

As a reminder, the final decision on the nature of Jesus indicated above was made by the Council of Nicaea, led by Emperor Constantine in the year 325 and, finally, the Council of Chalcedon, held in the year 451.<sup>7</sup> As is well known, the Arian Controversy, which affirms that Jesus was created by the Father, was completely eliminated after the Council of Constantinople in the year 381. Later, in Chalcedon, the Monophysite point of view was eliminated.<sup>8</sup> In this last Council, the person of Jesus, who was perceived as having a unique nature, was buried in the district of the city of Istanbul.<sup>9</sup>

All documentation available and other recent archaeological studies indicate that before Christianity adopted the doctrine that is practiced today, there were various theologically-differentiated Christianities. The work of Antonio Piñero on these Christianities is worth studying. However, as we previously mentioned, we will go back well before these councils and will travel specifically to the nucleus, the four Gospels. Our question will be: Is it possible that there was an apotheosis of Jesus within the Gospels throughout their chronological composition? To respond to this question, we must

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<sup>5</sup> Allow me to say as a believer, if God wills it.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Tuckett, *Christology and the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Historia de la Cristiandad* (Madrid: Debate, 2011), 259.

<sup>8</sup> I consider Monophysitism to have one divided nature from two natures; one human and one divine and with the total surrender of the first to the second, using the force of will, it could be an attribute of all people and does not make a human being into a god. I am preparing my explanations concerning this point for further publications.

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, the literal translation of *Kadıköy* is "Town of the Judge." (See: Matthew 25:31-34)

compare the parallel accounts of the Gospels. We will consequently keep in mind the conclusions of the majority of scholars who believe that the source of the Synoptic Gospels was the Gospel of Mark.<sup>10</sup> However, as is demonstrated below, it has repeatedly been said that all of the Evangelists were very aware of the existence of the earlier Gospels, not only that of Mark, and when writing their own versions, were very conscious of the information in previous gospels.<sup>11</sup> We, therefore, will look at the Gospels in chronological order: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. With respect to John, we will take special care since, as is well known, the author of the fourth Gospel introduced many gnostic and subjective elements that complicate the performance of an objective study by a researcher.

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way through the Maze* (New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 20.

<sup>11</sup> In this regard, we observe in our study that not only was the effectiveness of Farrer Theory proven, but a new perspective was added as well.

## Characteristics of Divinity

Before beginning our study, it is of absolute importance to define the characteristics of a divine being. This will help us to understand which Biblical references Christology uses to proclaim the divinity of Jesus.

- 1) Be Lord of the universe.
- 2) Be the Son of God.
- 3) Receive worship from people.
- 4) Forgive sins.
- 5) Be called God.

Now we present some Gospel references that Christians use to arrive at the conclusion that Jesus is the Lord to whom worship is due and the Son of God who forgives sin:

- 1) Jesus as the Lord of the universe:

Mark 2:28 *"Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord even of the day of rest."*

If Jesus is the *Lord* of the day of the "Lord," then Jesus is the Lord.

- 2) Jesus the Son of God:

Matthew 26:63-64 *"Jesus remained quiet. The High Priest said to him in reply: 'I adjure you by the living God to tell us whether you are the Messiah, the son of God.' Jesus said to him: You said it..."*

- 3) Jesus was worshiped by his disciples:

Matthew 14:33 *"Then those who were on the boat came and worshiped him..."*

- 4) Jesus forgave people's sins:

Mark 2:10 *"So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins (he said to the paralytic)..."*

- 5) Jesus is God:

Matthew 1:23 *"...because what is conceived in her, it is of the Holy Spirit... And you will call His name Emmanuel, that stated, is: God with us."*

If Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit, which is believed to be part of the Tri-Divinity<sup>12</sup>, then he shares substance with God and, therefore, is God, exactly as Isaiah had prophesied in his time.

And so we have seen some cases wherein the Christology of today is developed exactly as it is understood. We will now conduct a detailed investigation into these points, one by one.

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<sup>12</sup> I call the Trinity the Tri-divinity. To save time we will not stop to discuss the difference between them now.

## Jesus the Master Teacher as the Lord of the Universe

The belief in Jesus as the Lord of the Universe is one of the foundational principles of Christianity. Almost all Christian churches believe in the lordship of Jesus in the sense of his possessing absolute domain over all of creation. The focus in our second chapter will be to discern which Gospel principles allow said affirmation to be realized.

Before mentioning Gospel verses which reference the lordship of Jesus, it is necessary to briefly explain that the usage of the term "Lord" in the Bible does not necessarily refer to divine beings in all cases. Today, just as in antiquity, this form of address is also used to show the utmost respect to certain individuals. Additionally, this term can mean to possess an authority over others. The following examples, among hundreds of others, are found in the Old Testament:

**Genesis 3:16** *"He said to the woman: 'The pains of your labor will multiply greatly; you will give birth to your children in pain; and your desire will be for your husband, and he will lord over you.'"*

Genesis 23:14-15 *"Ephron answered Abraham: 'My lord, listen to me. The field is worth four hundred silver pieces. What is this between us? Go quietly and bury your wife.'" dead?*

Isaiah 3:4 *"And I will give them youth as princes, and young boys will be their lords."*

We see an example in the Gospel of John in the New Testament where the divinity of Jesus is most clearly developed:

John 12:21 *"These came to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and they requested of him, saying: 'Lord, we would like to see Jesus.'"*

After verifying the key point of agreement on the meaning of the word "Lord," we will give some examples as to how this term is used and how it acquires other meanings when new Gospels are composed.

1) Mark's Gospel, the first of four, shows in verse 10:51 that Jesus asked a blind man what he wanted and the man replied to him: *"Master, that I should see!"* However, if we examine the answer's parallels in Matthew 20:33 and Luke 18:41, we observe that the term "Master" changes and becomes "Lord" and, moreover, Jesus does not only heal one person here, but now it is a multitude of people who ask for a miracle from the Nazarene. *"They said to him: 'Lord, that our eyes should open!'"* This

is a clear case of the evolution of the *Master* who goes from restoring one man's sight to the *Lord* who heals many afflictions.<sup>13</sup>

2) In Mark 12:28-29, the Pharisees and the Sadducees argue with Jesus and he responds. Suddenly, a scribe arrives and asks Jesus what the first commandment of the Mosaic Law is. Obviously, like any Jew, Jesus should answer as it is written in Deuteronomy 6:4 "*Hear, oh Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.*" However Mark makes a slight modification and hides the verb [to be] so that Jesus' answer is spoken in the following way: "*The first commandment is: 'Hear, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.'*"

As we cannot question the wisdom of Jesus and that he could have been mistaken about such an obvious reply, this answer causes us to suspect a possible theological interpretation of Mark's own, which changes the verse so that it is in agreement with his beliefs and creates mild confusion in the mind of the reader. Nevertheless, the scribe's reply in verse 32 was: "*Good Master, you have said the truth, that God is one and there is no other than Him.*" As we cannot doubt that the scribe understood Jesus' reply exactly as it is written in Deuteronomy 6:4, we confirm Mark's intention to omit the verb [to be] and we recover it in context.

But the "correction" of the verse in the following Gospel, which was written some 10 years later, is astonishing. Observe:

Matthew 22:35-37 "*...and one of them, a doctor of the law, asked him trying to catch him in a trap: 'Master, what is the most important commandment of the law?' Jesus replied to him: 'You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.'*"

As if Mark's first adaptation were not enough to cause confusion, we observe here how Matthew completely eliminates God's first commandment which prohibits the adoration of a divinity other than Yahweh and places, in its stead, the importance of loving the "Lord." Furthermore, it is now unknown if this Lord is Yahweh or Jesus himself. On the other hand, the scribe who appears in Mark, who, according to Matthew 7:29, did not have authority in his wisdom, is replaced here with an *expert of the law*. Therefore, what Matthew does here is achieve approval of the alteration of the Decalogue by having it come from the mouth of an "expert" of Mosaic Law and not just any scribe.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The increase in powers, according to the Gospels, is constant: Compare the increase of «four thousand men» of the multiplying of the loaves of bread in Mark 8:29 to «four thousand men, *not counting women and children*» in Matthew 15:38, and the «five thousand men» of Mark 6:44 to «five thousand men, *not counting women and children*» in Matthew 14:21.

<sup>14</sup> Although the form of the question from the "expert of the law" is not the same word for word as the question from Mark's "scribe," it is evident that Matthew is referring to the same account since he would have otherwise included Mark's original account in his Gospel as a separate account. In the face of the omission, the modification that Matthew made to Mark's same event is clear.

The modification by the third Evangelist is even more surprising than that of the second: In the two previous Gospels, Jesus was questioned by a scribe—or according to Matthew, by an "expert"—with the Pharisees and the Sadducees present. What Luke does now, in verse 10:25, is completely eliminate the scene of the dispute, change the form of the question, and, even worse, put Jesus' reply in the mouth of the "expert" in such a way that it is not Jesus anymore who responds to the question but a doctor of the law:

*"For then, a doctor of the law, wanting to put Jesus to the test, asked him this question: 'Master, what must one do to reach eternal life?' Jesus replied to him: 'What is written in the Law of Moses? What do you read there?' He replied: 'You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all of your strength and with all of your mind and your neighbor as yourself.'"<sup>15</sup>*

We see how the Evangelists gradually modify the term *Lord* so that it refers to the Master and, little by little, push Jesus into the field of divinity, eliminating the Decalogue. These blends are continuous throughout the Synoptic Gospels. Seeing this tendency to modify on the part of the Evangelists, we begin to question whether the existing theology concerning Jesus is correct or not. Was the Holy Spirit the only source of inspiration for the changes that the Evangelists made? We continue to see other examples of modification and evolution of information in the accounts.

The same apotheosis exists in the following verses, parallel to that of the previous examples: The *Master* of Mark 4:38 has become the *Lord* in Matthew 8:25. Similarly, *Master* from Mark 9:5 changes to *Lord* in Matthew 17:4; *Jesus* from Matthew 17:20 becomes *Lord* in Luke 17:6; and *Master* in Matthew 8:19 changes to *Lord* in Luke 9:57, along with other instances.

Upon studying the word "lord or Lord" in the Gospels, we observe that in Mark it appears at least 18 times, in Matthew 77 and in Luke 92 times. Among these instances, those that are directly related to Jesus appear 6 times in Mark<sup>16</sup>, 34 in Matthew<sup>17</sup> and in Luke<sup>18</sup> 49. These differences are due to the interspersions of the term *Lord* by each subsequent Evangelist when the same parallel accounts are referred to in the previously-written chronological Gospels. As we see later on, Matthew and successively Luke, insert the noun *the Lord* more frequently, either in the mouths of the participants in the accounts or in the Evangelists' own presentation:

1) Let's look at Peter's broken promise to Jesus in Matthew 26:35 when he says that he wouldn't turn him in even if it meant his own death *said to him: "Peter: 'Even if I have to die with you, I will*

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<sup>15</sup> Luke's modification has its origins in Mark 10:17. It is a very well-crafted mixture.

<sup>16</sup> Mark 1:3, 2:28, 7:28, 11:3, 11:9, 16:19

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 3:3, 7:21, 7:22, 8:2, 8:6, 8:8, 8:21, 8:25, 9:28, 9:38, 12:8, 13:51, 14:28, 14:30, 15:22, 15:25, 15:27, 16:22, 17:4, 17:15, 18:21, 18:26, 20:30, 20:31, 20:33, 21:3, 22:44, 22:45, 24:42, 25:11, 26:22, 27:10, 27:63, 28:6

<sup>18</sup> Luke 1:17, 1:28, 1:43, 1:46, 2:11, 2:15, 2:22, 3:4, 4:12, 5:8, 5:12, 6:5, 6:46, 7:6, 7:13, 7:31, 9:54, 9:57, 9:59, 9:61, 10:1, 10:2, 10:17, 10:40, 11:1, 11:39, 12:41, 12:42, 13:8, 13:15, 13:23, 13:25, 17:5, 17:6, 17:37, 18:6, 18:41, 19:8, 19:31, 19:34, 20:42, 20:44, 22:31, 22:33, 22:38, 22:49, 22:61, 24:3, 24:34

*never deny you. All of the disciples said the same.*" Compare this verse to Luke 22:33 "*He said to him: Lord, I am ready to go with you, not only to jail but also to death.*"

2) Another example is in Matthew 11:16-17: "*But, with what will I compare this generation?*" However, in Luke 7:31 it is: "*And the Lord said 'With what, therefore, will I compare the men of this generation...?'"*

These two examples explain the increase in the frequency of the term *Lord* to refer to Jesus. Why did each Evangelist add this term to his original version? But now we leave the answer to this question for the following chapters and we continue with our topic.

Once we have determined the non-historicity and subjectivity of the new appearances of the noun *Lord* in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, we must return to examining the Gospel according to Mark, which is the source of these Synoptic Gospels. It is necessary to determine if the first Evangelist truly wanted to refer to the divinity of Jesus as God with the term *Lord*, or if he was simply addressing Jesus as a respected Master whose words had authority, or even as the Messiah waited for by the people of Israel.<sup>19</sup> However, before beginning our study, we will have to thoroughly grasp the criteria that must be used to achieve the perfect interpretation of Biblical texts.

#### *Hermeneutics, art of interpreting sacred texts*

The word hermeneutics is derived from the Greek *hermeneuein* which means to interpret and explain. This term was originally used for the interpretation of obscure texts revealed by the gods or the oracles. Hermes, specifically, the messenger god of the mythological Greek gods, was considered the patron of communication and human understanding.

Today hermeneutics is defined as the science of interpreting the Bible. According to this science, the texts have a literal meaning and a subjective meaning. The subjective meaning can vary depending on the capacity for multidimensional understanding or on a previous doctrinal conviction that the person doing the interpretation has.<sup>20</sup> But for both meanings, there is a certain criteria that the analyst must use. They are principally as follows:

- 1) Have a correct translation of the text.

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<sup>19</sup> It must be remembered that, for Jews, the awaited Messiah was never considered to be God Himself nor His own Son in a literal sense. In the times of the Babylonian exile, they even came to believe that the Emperor of Persia, Cyrus, although he was not a Jew, was the awaited Messiah for having saved the Hebrews in Babylonia. As is observed, the concept of the Messiah for the Jews was very far from being the image of God Himself on earth, or His Son.

<sup>20</sup> Charles H. Cosgrove, *The Meanings We Choose: Hermeneutical Ethics, Indeterminacy and the Conflict of Interpretations* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 7.

2) Place the text to be interpreted within the thematic context of the Biblical passage. Here great importance must be given to reading the entire chapter in order to understand which account is related to the passage to be analyzed.

3) Be conscious of the geographical environment and the era in which the textual account occurred. Many times the references taken from Biblical passages are completely out of context.

4) Have knowledge of the meanings of certain words which *will* vary depending on the place and age in which they were written. Without this information, final conclusions cannot be drawn as to the meaning of certain terms.

5) Process the criterion of logic. This methodology decides if a literal interpretation or a subjective interpretation will be done. For example, in the praise to Yahweh in Psalms 136:2, we read:

*"Praise the God of gods, 11 He who took Israel from among them, 12 With a strong hand, and an outstretched arm."*

If the expressions *strong hand* and *outstretched arm* of Yahweh are not symbolically interpreted, we would have a God in the form of an idol. Here it is logically understood that these expressions are symbolic and that they refer to the fact that the liberation of the people of Israel was thanks to the strength and the help of Yahweh who defeated the army of the Pharaoh with his destructive strength as reflected in supernatural accounts.

On the other hand, if we understand the 1<sup>st</sup> verse literally, as if Yahweh were the god of other existing "gods," we would also fall into the error of attributing polytheism to a strictly monotheistic people such as Israel. The idea that the Jews were henotheists who believed that gods other than Yahweh could exist and that He were the greatest of them is nothing less than a conspiracy theory. Here we use logical criteria to perform hermeneutics correctly.

Once hermeneutic criteria are understood in order to achieve a perfect understanding of the texts, we will begin to analyze the passages of Mark's Gospel where the term "Lord" appears in all cases where it is attributable to a supposed divinity of Jesus:

**Mark 1:2** *"Here I send My messenger before your face, so that a way is prepared before you, 3 Voice that cries out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord; Straighten His paths."*

The first phrase corresponds to the first phrase of Malachi 3:1<sup>21</sup>, although the author only attributes his text to Isaiah 40:3, which is: "*Voice that cries out in the desert: Prepare a way for Yahweh; straighten the road in the wasteland for our God.*"

If we read the original text in the book of Isaiah, we realize that the voice that cries out in the desert orders the preparation of a way for Yahweh. Our confusion arises when the Evangelist substitutes the term *the Lord* for the name Yahweh. However, any scholar or Jew who is familiar with the Old Testament would automatically think that Mark was referring to the God Yahweh and not to Jesus when using the fragment from Isaiah 40:3. However, in the first phrase of the text, Mark refers to Jesus the Messiah, who is the messenger charged with preparing the way for the coming of Yahweh God.

The author of the Gospel of Matthew, however, to develop his theology, and not being satisfied with this verse, totally eliminates, in 3:3 of his book, what would become the first part of Mark's<sup>22</sup> text, that part which indicated that Jesus was only the messenger who opened the way for his Lord Yahweh. Matthew confuses the reader by leaving only the second part, Isaiah 40:3, as though it were not Yahweh but rather Jesus whose way is prepared:

Matthew 3:3 ~~Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.~~ The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, Make his paths straight.

Luke, in 3:4 of his book, also omits Malachi 3:1 and adds other verses from the Old Testament to develop his theory of salvation through Jesus.

Last, we will mention the Gospel according to John. Here, the mention of the passage from Isaiah 40:3 is no longer only an allegorical insinuation of the divinity of Jesus as it was in the cases of Matthew and Luke, but it is now John the Baptist himself who literally proclaims at the top of his lungs: "*I am the voice that cries out in the desert: Straighten the way of the Lord, as Isaiah the prophet said.*" Here the Gospel of John attempts to make the life of Jesus conform to what is prophesied in Malachi 3:1 and, thus, confirm Jesus' divinity through what John the Baptist says. In other words, if in Mark's Gospel, Jesus was the messenger who came to open the way to Yahweh, in John's Gospel, John the Baptist has literally become the messenger of the "God Jesus."

This evolution is clear evidence of the process of the apotheosis of Jesus, who goes from being sent by Yahweh God, to becoming Yahweh himself in approximately 40 years from the first gospel, the Gospel of Mark, to the Gospel of John.

**Mark 2:28** "*Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord even of the day of rest.*"

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<sup>21</sup> "*Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me.*"

<sup>22</sup> That is to say that he eliminates Malachi 3:1.

This sentence is said in response to the Pharisees' criticism of Jesus for allowing his disciples to work on the Sabbath. Before this verse, Jesus had responded to them by giving the example of David, who when he needed to, entered the temple and ate from the bread of the offering, which was something only the priests were allowed to do. Not only that, but King David offered this food to those who were with him.

In this passage, Jesus continues to say that the Sabbath, or any day of the week, "was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Therefore it is understood in these two statements by Jesus, that just as David "made himself *Lord* of the bread" by breaking an established rule out of need, Jesus could make himself *Lord* of any day of the week in the same way. In conclusion, this sentence does not indicate that Jesus is the "God" of the Sabbath, that he is someone who necessarily authorizes others to break an established regulation with the same authority as King David when he did it.

**Mark 7:28** "*She answered and said to him: 'Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'*"

The context of this sentence corresponds to when a Greek woman asks Jesus to heal her possessed daughter. Quickly, Jesus replies to her with a metaphor in which the bread, the help, is for the children (the Jews), not for the dogs (the Gentiles). In spite of this rebuff, the Greek woman accepts her humiliating status, which has lowered her from human to dog, and continues to beg Jesus for help. It is impossible to confirm that the Greek woman, when she said *Lord*, thought that she was talking to a god. It is not out of the realm of possibility, however, that a person considered to be of such low status by the "children" would address any man who has authority over him or her as *Lord*.

**Mark 11:3** "*And if someone tells you: 'Why do you do this?' Say that the Lord needs it, and that later he will return it.'*"

Here, for the entry into Jerusalem, Jesus asks his disciples to bring him a donkey that had never been ridden and that is now tied opposite them. The Nazarene tells them that if anyone opposes the taking of the donkey, they should tell him that it is because the Lord needs it.

We don't know to which place Jesus was referring, if it was a house or a farm where the donkey was found, since by his indication there were also other men who could have stopped Jesus' disciples from taking the animal. In fact, in verse 11:4, it is the men who ask the disciples "*What are you doing untying the donkey?*" The disciples answered this question exactly as the Master had instructed them to (11:6) and took what they wanted with the permission of the animal's owners. We here see Jews lending the donkey to the traveling disciples who ask for it for *the Lord*. It does not occur to us that the reason that they would allow the disciples to take the animal could be because these Jews had

thought that the Lord Creator Yahweh God had come and that He needed a donkey to ride on to enter Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup>

To explain this concession, we must situate ourselves in the society and the era in which Jesus lived. Rabbis and travelers were greatly respected among the population. It was even said: "*Consider all men as if they were bandits, but treat them as if one of them were the very rabbi Gamaliel!*"<sup>24</sup> This respect for rabbis is still very prevalent among the Jewish population today. With this we conclude that not even the disciples when they referred to Yahweh with the mention of "*the Lord needs it*" nor the Jews who lent them the donkey thought that the *Lord* who needed the donkey was the Omnipotent God or His own Son. They simply assumed that a master, respected by his disciples, was asking for their help.

After finishing this explanation, we call the attention of the reader to the way the Evangelist introduces, in the following verses, the widely-accepted information that the disciples of Jesus cut branches from palm trees to prepare the way for Jesus, as the Old Testament had already announced.<sup>25</sup> The Evangelist's effort to contextualize, which places Jesus within this prophetic context, is clearly meant to achieve a theological objective. Now we will see some logical contradictions implied by the manner in which the author presents this account.

The Mount of Olives was a place where the deceased were buried. According to the book of Zechariah, the Mount of Olives is the place where Yahweh will begin to resurrect the dead. For this reason, in ancient times, all Jews wanted to be buried there. In fact, today more than 150,000 graves, including tombs, are found in this ancient cemetery. One must also remember that the Sermon on the Mount took place at the same site. One can imagine the traffic that there was between the mountain and the city. It is therefore unimaginable that, from the city to this mountain, there would not have been a path of sufficient width for someone to easily pass riding a donkey. That is to say that it does not seem plausible that the disciples would have had to cut palm branches to "prepare" the way for the "Lord." If we add to this the fact that the Romans were very strict about maintaining streets and roads and removing hanging tree limbs so that a man could pass even when riding a camel, then the non-historicity of this scenario; that is, that the disciples opened the way for the Nazarene between the heavily-traveled Mount of Olives and the city of Jerusalem, is evident.

However, the contradiction does not end here. Verse 11:8 says: "*...and they laid down the branches along the way.*" The writer of the Gospel according to Mark must not have been familiar with the Roman administration responsible for the maintenance of Roman Empire routes and roads. The legal

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<sup>23</sup> In fact, in the following verse, the matter is even further clarified when the Evangelist states that everyone, upon seeing Jesus on the donkey proclaimed: "*Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*"

<sup>24</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Usos y costumbres de los judíos en los tiempos de Cristo* (Barcelona: Editorial Clie, 2008), 69.

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 40:3

tractates Bava Kamma and Bava Batra include prohibitions against the throwing of obstacles along the paths, and the spilling of water on roads, or the leaving of any object on them. Also prohibited was the leaving of construction materials or other debris such as broken windows or thorns along the sides of roads. The penalties for breaking these laws would have been terrifying. With this, we emphasize once more the possibility that this account could not have been historical. Moreover, the Master who was faithful in paying taxes to Caesar would never have allowed his disciples to put their lives in danger by ignoring a Roman administrative law.

Taking this error into account, we can see that the writer of the Gospel of Matthew—as in the cases mentioned previously—tries to correct and evolve Mark's contradiction by introducing the information that Jesus was accompanied by large crowds. With this, we wish to say that Jesus' disciples "had" to cut branches from trees because the crowds were so large that they didn't fit on the path<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, he adds new text from the Old Testament which he tries to relate to Jesus:

*Matthew 21:5 "Tell the daughter of Zion: Here, your King is coming to you, gentle, and seated on an ass, and on a donkey, foal of a beast of burden."*

As it can be seen, there are now two animals.<sup>27</sup> Why is this? The answer is simple. If we look at the text of the book of Zechariah we will see the following verse:

*9:9 "Be joyful, daughter of Zion; sing with jubilee, daughter of Jerusalem: here, your King will come to you, a just Saviour, humble, and mounted on an ass and on the donkey, foal of an ass."*

Matthew, upon finding this verse in the Old Testament, did not hesitate to use it in his gospel, although he knew that there was just one ass that was supposedly with Jesus, not two. This is a clear attempt to fit Jesus to passages of the O.T. that are out of context, according to hermeneutic criteria.

Seeing how the authors of the Gospels modify texts, how might the reader react to what Luke, trying to explain the same account, did in his gospel? It suffices to read verses 35 and 36 from chapter 19 of his book. Luke first reduces the number of animals to one again, and afterwards, facing impossibility, completely omits the preparation of the path by the disciples.

John, the last Evangelist, did the best he could do by completely omitting the act of preparing the way and the laying of the palm branches on the ground. Now the branches are in the hands of those who await the arrival of Jesus, and not on the road. John realized the impossibility of placing the account within the historical context of the O.T. because of the laws governing the Roman Empire's administration of public routes. The historicity of one of the most significant accounts of Christianity—

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<sup>26</sup> Matthew 21:8

<sup>27</sup> Many new versions of the New Testament intentionally omit the mention of the second animal when translating the original Greek text.

the triumphant entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem riding on a donkey on a road prepared by a multitude-therefore, remains in awkward doubt.

***Mark 11:9 "And those who went before and those who came behind shouted, saying: Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"***

As we explained previously, besides the doubtful existence of this account, here the noun *Lord* refers to Father God and not to Jesus. In any case, the Nazarene would have come in the name of his Lord, and this Lord could have been none other than Yahweh. With the introduction of this verse, Mark confirms what had already announced at the beginning of his Gospel: "Jesus is the Messenger who comes in the name of the Lord Yahweh."

***Mark 12:36 "Because David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'Yahweh said to my Lord, sit at My right hand so that I would put your enemies on a stool at your feet.'"***

When performing an exegesis with this text, before anything else, we must argue the historicity of whether what is said was really said by Jesus or not. As we have already seen in previous examples, the use of O.T. texts was to make Jesus fit the scriptures' historical context and thereby adapt the theologies of the Evangelists to the original religion of Yahweh. We have also verified and will continue verifying the error in the selection of these texts on the part of the authors. All of this, from the outset, makes us doubt the veracity of whether it was Jesus who uttered these words in the Gospel of Mark.

Second, Jesus, who was the humble master who always affirmed that "*the last will be the first and the first the last,*"<sup>28</sup> had given up this humility and had opted to glorify himself even while contradicting himself: "*If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing...*"<sup>29</sup> This goes against the message of humility that the Master lived and taught.

Our third point is a critique of Mark's verse in order to discover the Evangelist's intention. If we have to link the text to Jesus of Nazareth, at the mention of *Lord*, the only interpretation would be that the Evangelist meant to refer to the Messiah, who according to the Jews, had to be a descendant of King David. This would be acceptable without great opposition for any scholar. Obviously, the Messiah would be far greater than King David and it is not impossible that the father of Solomon, when he said *Lord*, could have been referring to the Messiah awaited by the Jews.

To consider the fourth point, we must return to hermeneutic criteria in order to understand these texts. If we want to interpret this passage in Mark, we must read, before anything else, some of the previous chapters of the text. The verse is taken from the book of Psalms 110:1. In chapter 108, the

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<sup>28</sup> Matthew 20:16

<sup>29</sup> John 8:54

texts talk about the people of Israel and their attempt to rise above other nations and conquer other lands. To achieve this, Israel needs the help of God and with His strength, they will destroy all their enemies. In addition, if we consider that the book of Psalms was written hundreds of years before the arrival of Christ, we would naturally assume that the *Lord* mentioned in the text was Israel, the *Lord* of all the nations and the Jews.

The fifth point is related to the fourth point in that it also has to do with hermeneutical methodology. King David says "*Yahweh said to my Lord.*" If this text had referred to Jesus the Messiah, the text would have read: "*Yahweh said to the Lord*" because the possessive adjective *my* indicates proximity of the individual to the object. If we read the Psalms and other scriptures, we cannot see this proximity of King David to anything that is not Israel. The scriptures do not show us that David had a close relationship to a Master in his daily life, so we cannot assume that this is a reference to Jesus. All of his work was for Israel and the restoration of its power among other nations.

In conclusion, we deduce that the text taken by the writer of the Gospel of Mark probably does not treat Jesus as a historical figure and is out of context. It seems as though the author wanted to allegorically reflect his belief as was the tradition. With the mention of *Lord*, there is nothing else to conclude but that the Evangelist wanted to confirm Jesus' identity as the awaited Jewish Messiah who will govern the nations in eschatological times, and other nations will be subjected to His governance.

**Mark 16:19** "*And the Lord, after speaking to them, was received above in the heavens, and sat at the right hand of God.*"

After examining the previous cases, we can only conclude that Mark, by this last use of the word *Lord*, was referring to the Great Master, Jesus, as the Messiah who would be received by his God to sit at His right hand for his Second Coming into the world. We say it this way because Jews who wait for the Messiah, and critics throughout history, do not accept a failed man on the cross as a saviour and, therefore, this triumph will be completed in his Second Coming. Christians interpret this *failure* on the cross as *salvation from sins and a victory in defeat*, but the belief in his Second Coming to the world continues to live on.<sup>30</sup>

To conclude this chapter, we can clearly see that the designation of Jesus as the Lord of the Universe did not originate in the Gospel of Mark, which is the source of the Synoptic Gospels. Furthermore,

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<sup>30</sup> The current focal point of contemporary critics is the authority of the Second Letter to the Thessalonians. Antonio Piñero argues that Paul was not the author of this letter since in the same text the defense is begun for the idea that the Second Coming of Jesus will be in eschatological times and not immediately as the Pauline community of the era believed. The percentage of critics who think that Paul is the author of the letter is around fifty percent. In my work, subtitled *The Doctrine of Paul*, I will explain the motives for the Church's urgency to make the decision to accept this letter as true or false. Whatever the decision, it will have grave consequences for the Christian faith. We leave this topic for now and continue with our topic of study.

we verified that the later Evangelists modified the references that presented Jesus as human and changed him into a divine being.

## Jesus as son of God

Passages wherein Mark<sup>31</sup> proclaims Jesus as the son of God or the Son of God:

Mark 1:1 *"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, son of God."*

Mark 3:11 *"And the unclean spirits, seeing him, bowed before him and shouted, saying: 'You are the Son of God.'"*

Mark 5:7 *"And calling out in a loud voice, he said: 'What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the God Most High? I implore you by God not to torment me.'"*

Mark 9:7 *"Then a cloud came and overshadowed them, and from the cloud was a voice that said: 'This is my beloved son, listen to him.'"*

Mark 15:39 *"And the centurion who was opposite him, seeing that after calling out he had died, said: 'This man truly was the son of God.'"*<sup>32</sup>

Mark 14:61-62 *"He remained quiet and replied nothing. The High Priest asked him again and said to him: 'Are you the Messiah<sup>33</sup>, the son of the blessed one?' And Jesus said to him: 'I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven.'"*

Mark 13:32 *"But no one knows the day and the hour, not even the angels that are in heaven, nor the son, but only the Father."*

Now we will reflect upon the definition of "son of God" but without the definite article in front. This term is used frequently in the Old Testament. Here are some examples:

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<sup>31</sup> We remember that the Gospels according to Matthew, Luke and John, having been evolved by their authors from the original source of Mark, are not taken as the bases of our study in this chapter. And so we will take the first Gospel as the basis for the four. (Although some scholars do not believe that John kept the Gospel of Mark in mind, the examples that will be shown in this work wholly reveal the contrary).

<sup>32</sup> The original text in Greek does not have the article *the* before the word *son*, unlike some new translations.

<sup>33</sup> The Greek translation uses the word Christ, but literally speaking, the High Priest of Jerusalem, who belonged to the sect of the Sadducees, could not have used this term this way in Greek since it did not even exist yet to refer to Jesus. Therefore, we use the original term, *the Messiah*.

Genesis 6:1-2 *"And it happened that when men began to multiply over the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and took as wives all those that they liked from among them."*

Deuteronomy 14:1 *"You are sons of Yahweh, your God; do not cut yourselves, nor cut your hair for the dead."*

Jeremiah 31:20 *"'Is not Ephraim My son, My beloved son?'—says the Lord—'I often have to punish him but even so I love him. Because of this My heart longs for him and I surely will have compassion for him.'"*

Exodus 4:22-23 *"And so you will say to Pharaoh: 'Thus says the Lord: Israel is My child, My first-born son. And I said to you: 'Let My child go so he can serve Me,' but you refused to let him go. Therefore I will kill your child, your first-born son.'"*

We also see an example of Yahweh as Father of the nation of Israel:

Malachi 1:5 *"Your eyes will see it and you will say: 'The Eternal is great beyond the borders of Israel.' 6 A child honors his father and a servant his master. If I am therefore Father, where is My honor?"<sup>34</sup>*

Common sense suggests that to be "a child or children of God" comes to mean a close relationship with the Creator. As is seen in the passage from Deuteronomy 14:1, when Yahweh defines the Israelites as His children, it does not refer to a parental nor a consubstantial relationship, but that He wanted to say: "My dear servants, My beloved people." The expression "child or children of God" in Jewish literature was not used to refer to a physical descent from God.<sup>35</sup> With this explanation, it is also clear that when Yahweh proclaims Israel as His first-born son it did not mean that the people of Israel were genetic descendants of God and that they shared His essence. In Jeremiah, verse 31:20 wherein God proclaims Ephraim as His beloved son, we understand the same logical concept. Similarly, Jewish kings were also referred to as "children of God"<sup>36</sup> since they represented "God's chosen people."

If the references of Mark, the first Evangelist, are correctly analyzed, then the relationship that exists between God and Jesus is at the metaphoric level of the references that we mentioned in the Old Testament. Apart from verses 3:11 and 14:61-62, no quote includes the article "*the*" which would make the reader think that Mark actually meant to say "the Son of God." Jesus, in the passages from Mark that we have mentioned, is any son of God, in the sense of being a servant of God from among

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<sup>34</sup> Yahweh is asking the nation of Israel to perfect their sacrifices at the altar.

<sup>35</sup> Maxine Grossman, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 698.

<sup>36</sup> Reimer Roukema, *Jesus, Gnosis and Dogma* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 150.

those existing in Israel and beloved child who fulfills the will of God to the utmost. Here is an example:

Let us suppose the existence of an individual named Jacob in antiquity, in the time of Moses. Calling this Jacob, 'Jacob, son of God or son of the Most High,' does not make Jacob "*The Son of God Most High*."<sup>37</sup> The article before the noun totally changes its meaning and changes the individual from a servant of God to someone consubstantial with God. In short, Jesus as "son of the God Most High" in Mark 5:7 does not make him "*the son of the God Most High*" but just any son or servant of God.

Parallel to this explanation, we can even cite passages from the New Testament that reflect the common understanding among the Jewish-Hellenic population of the first century about being called (a) child(ren) of God.

John 1:12-13 *"And to all those who received him, to those who believe in his name, he gave them power to be made children of God."*

1 John 3:2 *"Beloved, now we are children of God and what we must be has still not come to be. But we know that when He manifests Himself, we will be in His likeness because we will see Him as He is."*

Galatians 3:25-26 *"But come to the faith, we are no longer under the law because you are all children of God because of faith in Christ Jesus."*

Romans 8:14 *"They are children of God, those who let themselves be guided by the Spirit of God."*

Romans 8:29 *"For those that he knew in advance, he also predestined them to be conformed to the image of **his** son, so that he was the first-born son among many brothers."*<sup>38</sup>

Once the meaning of becoming a child of God is clarified and it is noted that it has the same meaning as the passages from Mark, we now see the two exceptions where "*son of God*" is used with the article *the*:

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<sup>37</sup> It is the same to say "*Ephraim is son of God*" as to say "*Ephraim is son of the Most High*," since God is *the Most High*. Therefore, the variation of the prepositional phrase "son of God" to "son of the Most High" does not alter the condition of the object of the phrase, *son*.

<sup>38</sup> In this case even Paul considers the possibility of coming to the level of being another son of God, being the brother of the first-born son of God, Jesus. It is not possible to think that Paul could believe that someone who becomes a child of God could share substance with Jesus and thereby with God and hence be glorified with them. If it is interpreted in this way, we will have no other option than to claim that Paul's beliefs are pantheist. Furthermore, there are many verses that could fuel suspicion of this possible assertion: See Romans 8:17: *"And being children, we are also heirs, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ; as such, however, we should suffer with Him so that we are glorified with Him."* Also see its parallel in Galatians 4:7: *"There by the grace of God, you are no longer a slave, but a child, and if you are a child, you are also an heir."*

In Mark 3:11, those who declare that Jesus is *the* Son of God are those with unclean spirits. Situating this account in its historical context, it is understood that these *possessed* people, in our scientific terminology of today, were people who suffered from bipolar disorder. Consequently, those who proclaimed Jesus as "*the*" Son of God in the Gospel of Mark are not people of balanced reasoning. Therefore, we cannot accept as canon a theology based on a statement from people who suffer from a mental illness.<sup>39</sup>

Concerning the 13:32<sup>40</sup> passage, we can confirm two points:

1) This text is open to interpretation since a clear mention of "the son of God" no longer exists exactly as it could have been understood with evidence. With the use of "nor *the son*" the Evangelist could not have effectively meant "to the son of God" or "to any son of God." In the face of such ambiguity, the Christian statement that the Evangelist could have used to refer to Jesus as "*the* Son of God" cannot be accepted as valid.

2) Throughout the Gospel of Mark, the author identifies Jesus as "the son of Man" ten times and not even once as "the son of God" except—as we saw previously—when certain individuals with mental disorders refer to the Nazarene by this name. It is impossible to think that the Evangelist, after having referred to Jesus so many times as "the son of Man," here would address him as the Son of God and, moreover, do it in such a negative way.

Now, with respect to the 14:61-62<sup>41</sup> passage, there are various points that need to be clarified:

1) The question is not correctly formulated since the High Priest could not have asked two questions at the same time: "Are you the Messiah and also the son of the blessed one?" If we keep the Jewish manner of thinking of the era in mind, and most of all, that of the High Priest of the Sadducees, and note that the question is formed as if the awaited Messiah were the son of God himself, we would realize that we are not talking about a historical fact, since for the Jews, the awaited Messiah was not a god-man. To consider this passage as truth would imply that we would accept that the Sadducees already took for granted that the promised messiah was going to simultaneously be the son of God. However, no information exists in the Torah, nor in other books of the Tanakh, nor in all of the Talmud tradition, that suggests that the Messiah waited for by the Jews had to be *the son* of God.

2) If we had to accept the question of the Sadduceean High Priest and Jesus' affirmative response as historical, we would have to think that with the word "blessed," the High Priest could only have

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<sup>39</sup> In Mark 3:1, demon-possessed men address Jesus as «the Son of God.» However, in Matthew 8:29, those who did not address Jesus as «*the* Son of God» were the *demon possessed*, since this passage in Matthew does not include the article «the.»

<sup>40</sup> "But no one knows the day and the hour, not even the angels that are in heaven, nor the son, but only the Father."

<sup>41</sup> "He remained quiet and replied nothing. The High Priest asked him again and said to him: 'Are you the Messiah, the son of the blessed one?' And Jesus said to him: 'I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven.'"

been referring to King David. With this, yes, we could accept the fact as real, since the Messiah waited for by the Jews had to be a descendant of the family and house of King David, who, in his time, effectively received God's blessings, as is reflected in the Second Book of Samuel 7:29 "...*You, Lord, you promised it, and with Your blessing my family will be blessed forever.*"<sup>42</sup> In this case, there would be sufficient motive to kill Jesus since the proclamation of a Messiah of the house of David would mean the end of the Sadducees' role as leaders and representatives of the Jewish people in the court of the Emperor.

3) With this explanation, and with Jesus' answer of *I am*, it is obvious that Jesus correctly understood the question exactly as it was explained in the second point and that, evidently, he believed that he was the Messiah that Israel awaited and, at the same time, a descendant of the house of the blessed family of David.

With the three points considered concerning Mark 14:61-62, we rule out the possibility that the High Priest could have thought that he had before him someone who claimed to be, first, the Messiah waited for by Israel and second, *the Son of God Himself*. Now we will look at the parallel of this account in the Gospels that follow, beginning with Matthew and, then, Luke and John. What would readers think about the accounts of later Evangelists now that they had been able to verify the apotheosis to which the Nazarene had been subjected each time that he found himself in the hands of his authors? Let's see what they did:

The same account is found in the Gospel of Matthew in the 26:63 passage.<sup>43</sup>

*"Jesus remained quiet. The High Priest said to him in reply: 'I adjure you by the living God, to tell us whether you are the Messiah, the son of God.'"*

The text clearly shows Matthew's "correction," which substitutes Mark's original direct object, *the son of the blessed one*, for the new *the son of God*. This is the process of the deification of Jesus in the hands of the Evangelist Matthew. If the Christian world today assumes that the term "blessed one" was meant to refer to God when it was used in Mark 14:61-62<sup>44</sup>, it is simply because of the changes that the Evangelist Matthew made.

The second change in Matthew is also in the form of a question: "...*tell us whether you are the Messiah...*". The writer of the Gospel of Matthew knew that the High Priest could not accept that the

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<sup>42</sup> In fact, in the second Gospel written, the very first thing Matthew does is position Jesus as the Son of David. (Matthew 1:1)

<sup>43</sup> Some translations omit the article *the* from the original Greek translation, maybe erroneously or maybe because of their theological objective.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Danove, *The Rhetoric of the Characterization of God, Jesus, and Jesus' Disciples in the Gospel of Mark* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 73.

awaited Messiah would also be the son of God, hence the form of the question is no longer direct as it is in Mark. Instead, the Nazarene is accused of making this claim himself.

The corrections of the second Evangelist do not stop here. We see in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus had supposedly answered the question with an uncertain *I am*. We do not know whether he answered in the affirmative to being *the Messiah*, to being *the son of the blessed one* or to being both at the same time. Another change that Matthew makes is even clever. He changes the "*I am*" to "*You said it.*" That is to say, "*Everything to which you have referred in this question is true; you yourself said it.*" Still, if Matthew's change is surprising, what Luke does with the same account is even more astonishing. Remember that Luke had 20 more years than Mark to think of a new way of retelling the events.

22:67 "*If you are the Messiah, tell us.*" But He said to them: '*If I tell you this, you will not believe and if I ask you, you will not respond.* 69 *But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.*' 70 *They all said: 'So, are you the Son of God?' And He responded to them: 'You (plural) say that I am.'*"

The evolution of the account in Luke is extraordinary. What Luke does first is divide the question that was originally, "*Are you the Messiah, son of the blessed one?*" By doing this, Luke completely eliminates any confusion caused by the uncertain questions in Mark and Matthew. In his account, Luke combines the two questions into a single direct question, eliminating the first part of the speech and leaving the second part of Mark's<sup>45</sup> question, and Matthew's<sup>46</sup> modification. Now we see a clear separation of the formulation of the question: *Are you the Son of God?*

The second change in Luke is the replacement of the first part of the question with, "*If you are the Messiah, tell us.*" In this way, Luke assures that his readers do not think that being the Messiah has anything to do with being *the Son of God*. Remember that the Messiah whom the Jews awaited did not have to be the Son of God but could be any human.

The third change in Luke from Mark's *I am* and Matthew's *You said it* is the introduction of a new answer to the question. "*If I tell you (plural) this, you will not believe and if I ask you, you will not respond.*" This is a reply that is much wiser than the previous ones.

Jesus' reply is the fourth modification in Luke. In the supposed original version, Jesus had replied *I am*, thus remaining the only person who claimed to be *the Messiah, the son of the blessed one*. However, with the reply of "*You (plural) say that I am,*" it is no longer Jesus who affirms it, but all

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<sup>45</sup> Are you the Messiah, the son of the blessed one?

<sup>46</sup> Are you the Messiah, the son of God?

the Jews who were present share the same affirmation. We remember that Matthew had changed the *I am* to *You said it*. Now the *You (singular) said it* is *You (plural) say that I am*.

Before completing our study of the account, it is worth mentioning the parallel of this same account in the Gospel of John. Does the reader remember what the author of the last Gospel did when faced with the impossibility of explaining the preparation of the way for the Messiah who arrived on a donkey from the Mount of Olives? He does the same here. Facing the uncertainty of the account, the Evangelist completely omits the question of the High Priest and substitutes other questions for it in order to offer a solution for the errors in the previous Gospels.

In conclusion, in this chapter, through a detailed reading of the Gospel of Mark, we contend that it might be illogical to attribute a possible divinity to Jesus. For Mark, Jesus was any "*son of God*" and not "*the son of God*." In addition, we have again verified the changes in the texts that the Evangelists Matthew, Luke and John made, and noted the gradual change in the person of Jesus—from the human Jesus, a chosen child and servant of God, to the deified Jesus, the Son of God Himself.

## Worship of Jesus

One of the characteristics of a divinity is the worship that it receives from its servants. Today, almost all the Christian world declares Jesus as God and offers its worship in adoration. Below, we will see what the Christians based their Gospels on in order to support their belief and we will also check to see if the historicity of such practices in the Nazarene's life can be verified.

First of all, one has to mention that in the Gentile world, the worship of emperors was not a novelty. Augustus, the successor of Julius Caesar, promoted the idea that, after the assassination of his father, he had reached the sphere of the gods. With this declaration, Augustus had automatically become "*the Son of God*." As soon as the idea spread, temples were erected and priests began to worship before the images of these sovereigns. The world of Rome easily joined the trend of offering worship to the Emperor.<sup>47</sup>

In the Middle East, the situation was no different. The Pharaohs had been venerated by their citizens for a long time. Similarly, Alexander the Great and the monarchs of Babylonia were venerated and linked to divinity in one way or another. Greece was not offering anything different: the heroes and saviors of the Greek nation became demigods after their death.<sup>48</sup>

The cultural situation and religious customs of antiquity provided a perfectly-prepared natural base for the acceptance of a savior, son of god and assassinated king, all at the same time. But as we have previously mentioned, our objective is not to prove the deification of Jesus in history, but in the canonical Gospels. Thus, as always, we will start the analysis with the first Gospel composed, which is that of Mark.

First, it is necessary to mention that in this Gospel we do not have any verses that indicate that Jesus was worshiped by other people, except for 5:6. One must remember that being a god requires being worshiped by people. From this perspective, texts 3:11, 5:22, 5:33 and 7:25 are not part of our analysis because the original versions in Greek do not mention the practice of worship or prostration before our object of study, Jesus, but the action appears as *falling at his feet*. If the reader wants to check these texts with his own Gospel and if instead of *falling at the feet of Jesus* he finds *fall in worship* or *prostrate in worship of Jesus*, this is simply due to a bad translation of the text, intentionally or innocently. Falling at the feet of someone is not the same as adoring someone in worship. Long ago

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<sup>47</sup> Antonio Piñero, *Guía para entender el Nuevo Testamento* (Madrid: Trotta, 2011), 119.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

many needy people would fall at the feet of a powerful person to plead for help. They also did it as thanks or to escape punishment before an authority. After this clarification, let us see the examples in Mark:

**3:11** *"And on seeing him, the unclean spirits fell before him, and they spoke, saying: 'You are the Son of God.'"*

Although we have previously mentioned this text in Chapter II, it is a good example to consider again. Here, the Evangelist is talking about people who suffer from a psychological illness. Even so, Mark does not mention that these unclean spirits worshiped Jesus but only that they fell before him.

**5:22** *"And one of the princes of the synagogue came, named Jairo, and after seeing him, fell before his feet, 23 and he begged him: 'My daughter is in the agony of death: come and you will put your hand on her so she is saved, and lives.'"*

In contrast to the first example, here we have a person who is far from being possessed or having a mental disorder. He is, rather, a religious authority of the era. We can all logically think that the individual is asking the Master for urgent assistance for his daughter, begging Jesus to heal her. It is impossible to imagine this rabbi of the synagogue offering worship to Jesus instead of Yahweh during this account. Who would not fall before the feet of a Master who has become famous for saving lives in a miraculous way if his or her child were afflicted in a life-threatening way? Today there is no shortage of people who offer fortunes to pay for a bone marrow transplant to save their children's lives. This detail completely rules out the possibility that this rabbi was offering worship to the Nazarene; it simply shows that he was only humbly asking for his help.

**Mark 5:33** *"So the woman, scared and trembling, knowing what had been done in her, came and fell before him, and he told her the whole truth. 34 And he told her: 'Child, your faith has saved you: go in peace and be healed of your scourge.'"*

This account corresponds to a woman that supposedly suffered from bleeding for twelve years. According to the Evangelist, on realizing that Jesus was coming, she left to see him to at least touch his clothes because she believed doing that, on its own, would cure her illness. This is in fact what happened, but Jesus turned and asked why the woman had touched him without his consent. When the woman realized that he was asking about her, she started to tremble with fear, thinking that Jesus would be angry and reprimand her. It is at this moment that the woman falls before Jesus and confesses to him what had happened.

In addition to the fact that—as we have mentioned previously—the Evangelist does not say that the woman adored Jesus, but that she simply fell at his feet, we observe that the reason the woman behaved that way was not to worship Jesus, but because she felt tremendous fear of taking advantage of the famous prophet and also wanted to avoid punishment. In fact, the woman's first action was

nothing more than touching the hem of Jesus' garment to receive a healing. If Jesus had not started to ask about the woman, she would not have started to tremble and subsequently thrown herself to the ground before the Nazarene. It is clear in this situation that she fell down before Jesus to avoid punishment for touching him, not as an act of worship.

**Mark 7:25** *"Because a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit, after hearing of him, came and fell before his feet. 26 And the woman was Greek, of the Syrophenician nation, and she begged that he remove the demon from her daughter."*

In the analysis of this text, we find ourselves faced with a situation very similar to that of the prince of the synagogue. Those familiar with bipolar disease know very well the suffering that epileptic attacks can mean both for the afflicted and their whole family. These attacks can even be daily for some people. Even today there is no definitive therapy for this illness. The medicine for the majority of cases only serves to soften the intensity of the moments when the attacks start.

Consider the situation of the Greek woman. It is not surprising that upon learning of the arrival of a famous exorcist, she went running to see him and threw herself at his feet to ask for his help. The reader will confirm the desperation of this woman in the following verses where she accepts the condition of *being a dog that needs the leftovers that the children do not eat*.<sup>49</sup> Under no circumstances can one think that this act was an act of worship and servitude. Below we will see the only verse in the Gospel of Mark where Jesus is worshiped by an individual:

**Mark 5:1-6** *They came over to the side of the sea, to the region of the Gadarenes. 2 And when Jesus came off the ship, he was immediately met by a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit, 3 who had his dwelling place in the tombs, and no one could bind him, not even with chains. 4 Because he had been bound many times with shackles and chains, and the man had broken the chains to bits, and had broken the shackles into pieces; and no one could subdue him. 5 And always, day and night, he wandered in the mountains crying out and in the tombs cutting himself with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran to him and he worshiped him.*

Our reader can see, in Chapter III that the only people who addressed Jesus as «*the Son of God*» were «*unclean spirits*». Likewise, in the same way that one can verify that the only time that Jesus was worshiped in Mark, it was specifically by an demon-possessed person, or in today's language, a schizophrenic.

In conclusion, in Mark's Gospel, our five references completely rule out the hypothesis that the Nazarene would have been worshiped by anyone with the capacity to reason. How could anyone worship a being upon observing that he is only worshiped by people who are schizophrenic? If after the composition of the first gospel, which was written by Mark, no other gospels had been written,

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<sup>49</sup> Mark 7:28

no one in the world of Christianity would worship Jesus nor address him as «*the Son of God,*» since in this gospel the only ones who did so were «demon- possessed» people. Now we continue, this time, to find a real act of worship of Jesus and we start, of course, with the Gospels. As you will see below, there are certain indications of worship of the Master in this Gospel. Let us consider the verses:

**Matthew 2:11** "*And on entering the house, they saw the boy with his mother, Mary, and kneeling down, they worshiped him; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh.*"

In the first verse of our study is the baby Jesus who is worshiped by the wise men who came from the East. The story is not paralleled in any of the canonical Gospels. That is to say, the criterion of *multiple testimonies* is not completed. But we will analyze what hypothetically happened anyway:

According to the beliefs of the henotheist<sup>50</sup> religion of Zoroaster, which worships the god Ahura Mazda, there are figures called *moghs* or *magus*, which means "magician" in the Persian tongue. These *moghs*, who are the priests of said religion, practiced sorcery and magic along with astrology and demonology.<sup>51</sup> From there the word μάγος was introduced into the Greek vocabulary and subsequently to Latin with the pronunciation *magus*. If the appearance of a star at the moment of Jesus' birth had really occurred, these wise men would have been the first to know, while they were trying to predict the place of the event with their astrological calculations, because they were experts in this type of hidden science.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the fact that they found the child and, in the end, worshiped him is part of the religion of Mazdaism, not Judaism since, as we have mentioned previously, these wise men had many gods to worship. However, repeating what we said at the beginning, this account does not have a parallel in the Gospel of Mark and, facing the problem of approval, it was also omitted from the Gospels of Luke and John.

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<sup>50</sup> Polytheism with the acceptance of a god as the biggest among others. In the case of Zoroastrianism, otherwise called Mazdaism, Ahura Mazda is above all other gods. Opinions with respect to this can vary: Antón Pacheco is of the opinion that Zoroastrianism is a religion that is strictly monotheistic and rejects the idea of its dualism and henotheism (Pacheco, 2007, 3) even though, on numerous occasions in the books of Zoroastrianism, the term *ized* (god) is used to refer to different entities that interact under the command of Ahura Mazda. Pacheco believes that *ized* should not be understood in its literal sense but should be interpreted as *archangel*. Nazanin Amirian, in his book, *Gatha*, identifies the existence of evil and good gods in Zoroastrianism (Amirian, 1999, 22). Another Iranologist, Nimet Yildirim, of Turkish origin, translated *Ized Azer* literally as "the God of Fire" in his translation of *Ardâvirâf Nâmé* (Yildirim, 2011, 91). Moreover, Emiliano Gonzales Ferrín also believes that Zoroastrianism is indeed monotheistic but, at the same time, accepts the existence of dualism within itself. This dualism, however, is not a matter of two comparable gods but is rather a substantial monotheism which includes the possibility of dualism in terrestrial conduct (Ferrín, 2013, 103). In my opinion, the idea of considering Zoroastrianism as henotheistic has more validity than perceiving the religion as monotheistic.

<sup>51</sup> Examples of witchcraft and demonology in Zoroastrianism: "*And Zarathustra asked Ahura Mazda: 'How should I purify my house?...Ahura Mazda replied: You must recite the prayer of purification... Here is the formula for purification of fire: Ahya, thwa, athio. Oh, You, Fire whose works have existed since the beginning of time, I approach You Thee...'*" (Zend Avesta: XI).

<sup>52</sup> One must not forget that Zoroastrians were also awaiting the arrival of a messiah similar to that of the Jews. Modern critics affirm that this is due to the influence of Judaism on Mazdaism.

Matthew's inspiration for the wise men is not by coincidence but is from, as we will see in the chapter on Paul from the book subtitled *The Doctrine of Paul*, a direct influence of the Mazdaist doctrine through the Pauline teachings. However, for now, we will not get ahead of ourselves with more information about this, and will continue our study.

**Matthew 9:18** *While he was telling them these things, an important man came and worshiped Jesus, saying: My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her and she will live.*

This story is paralleled in Mark 5:22, but it differs –as we have explained before– in that the synagogue leader who lost his daughter does not worship Jesus but simply implores him to help save his daughter. However, Matthew, following his theological point of view, changes the terms in order to portray Jesus as a divine being who is worshiped.

**Matthew 14:33** *"Then those that were on the boat came and worshiped him, saying: 'You are truly the Son of God.'"*

This event occurred once in the middle of a stormy sea, with high winds and rough waves, when the disciples see Jesus walking on the water. Upon being saved from the storm, according to Matthew, they worshiped Jesus and testified that he was the Son of God. Now let us analyze our text:

According to psychological analyzes of people who talk about things that, in reality, don't exist, the overuse of words such as *truly*, *really*, or *honestly* to emphasize one's honesty is a sure sign that the veracity of the statements should be doubted.<sup>53</sup> In previous chapters, we have already caught evidence of obvious modifications in the Gospel of Matthew. What we are observing here is an exact copy of the statement *He truly was the Son of God*, which the gospel writer also uses again in Matthew 27:54. But let us go back to the starting point: The miracle of walking on water has its equivalent in Mark 6:49. But there is a difference:

Mark 6:54 *"And leaving the boat, they recognized him."*

Now let us read our text in Matthew again:

Matthew 14:33 *"Then those who were on the boat came and worshiped him."*

The introduction of the act of receiving worship from his disciples makes the deification process of the Jewish Master absolutely clear. While the author of Mark's Gospel does not mention any act of worship of Jesus by his disciples, Matthew adds it in his version.

**Matthew 15:25** *Then she came and worshiped him, saying: Lord, help me.*

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<sup>53</sup> José María Martínez Selva, *La psicología de la mentira* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2005), 92.

As we explained before, the parallel to this event is found in Mark 7:25 when the Greek woman asks Jesus to help her *drive the demons out* of her daughter. While the first Evangelist did not portray the woman as worshipping Jesus, the second Evangelist changes the words and portrays her as a worshiper of Jesus. This is more evidence of the divinization of Jesus in the hands of the Evangelist.

**Matthew 28:9** *"And behold, Jesus met them, saying: 'All hail!' And they approached, embraced his feet, and worshiped him."*

The account mentioned here has its equivalent in Mark's Gospel in verse 16:9:

*"As Jesus was resurrected in the morning, the first day of the week he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, of whom he had exorcised seven demons. 10 She went and let those that had been with him know, who were mourning and crying. 11 And when they heard that he lived and she had seen him, they did not believe it."*

Matthew, as he did at other times in his text, perfects the account of Jesus' resurrection. In Mark's text, Jesus had only appeared to Mary Magdalene. First, as will be observed in the verification, Matthew, facing the difficulty of reinforcing the first testimony of apparition, introduces "another" Mary<sup>54</sup>. Second, the mood of the disciples changes, from sad and not believing Magdalene's news, to running to meet Jesus and joyfully embracing his feet. The third change and the real object of study of this verse is the last agglutination of *and they worshiped him*. Once again we prove the theological purpose of the author of the Gospel of Matthew.

**Matthew 28:17** *"And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some were in doubt."*

This text has no equivalent in Mark. But taking into account the theological objective of the second Evangelist, we question the historicity of this event.

By introducing the phrase, "*but some were in doubt*," Matthew tries to clarify that not all of Jesus' disciples doubted his resurrection, or perhaps most of the disciples saw for themselves that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead.

To conclude this chapter, we note again that in the Gospel of Mark there is no indication that Jesus was worshiped by a Gentile much less by his own disciples. The worship of Jesus was introduced for the first time in Matthew's Gospel. Also, as we have already said, we will not analyze the details of John's Gospel since the metaphors in the Gospel of John make an objective reading, like the one we are carrying out with the Synoptic Gospels, impossible.

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<sup>54</sup> Matthew 28:1a

## Who forgives sins, Jesus or God?

To respond to the question that is the title of this chapter, reading the Old Testament suffices, without having to resort to the study of this chapter and present evidence, that only Yahweh could forgive sins. However, considering the miraculous account mentioned in Mark's Gospel—which we will see below—we are obliged to conduct an exegetical analysis:

*2:4 "And as they could not get closer because of the crowd, they lifted the ceiling above where he was and when they had made an opening, they lowered the stretcher where the paralytic lay. 5 On seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic: 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"*

First of all, we remember that we are not trying to deny the historical account of the miracle of the paralytic. But we do analyze the theological purpose behind the manner of exposition of this miraculous event. One must not forget that the historical events concerning Jesus are written in such a way that they correspond to the doctrinal intentions of the Evangelists.

When analyzing Mark 2:5 one must take into account verse 10: *"So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins (he said to the paralytic)..."*

Looking at these two texts, we can talk about two different subjects: The first is that Jesus informs the paralytic of the forgiveness he has received for his sins and the second, according to the second verse, Jesus claims that he has the power to forgive sins. Jesus' supposed second affirmation originates in verse 7, when supposedly the Jews—probably Pharisees—ask the Nazarene:

*"Why does he talk like this? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins, if not only God?"*

The analyst should note that in the Gospel of Mark Jesus does not inform anyone apart from this paralytic of the forgiveness of his sins. It is specifically an ill person who receives forgiveness. This detail is of utmost importance. One has to look no further than the history of punishment and the trials to which the people of Israel were subjected by Yahweh to realize that, according to Jewish belief, exiles, tragedies, massacres and adversities were sent as punishment for their sins. Even Job, famous for his patience, had been subjected to great tests through illness. Among many examples in the O.T., we see an example of the reasoning behind this kind of divine test:

*Job 22:6 "You demanded collateral from your brothers without reason, and you stripped the naked of their clothes. 7 You did not give water to the thirsty, and you denied the hungry bread. 8 And as a powerful man that had land, and as a man of influence lived there, 9 you turned away the widows*

*with empty hands, and the orphan's arms were broken. 10 This is why you are surrounded by cheats and sudden terrors horrify you..."*

With this point clarified, let us go back to our text of study. We said that in the account Jesus informed the paralytic that his sins had been forgiven. But the way he did it was not like this: "*I, Jesus, have forgiven you your sins,*" but rather "*Your sins are forgiven.*"

Is there any clear example in the O.T. that the sins of the ill are forgiven by God for overcoming the test of physical discomfort? Let us look at the verses of the prophet Job, who is known throughout the world for his success in overcoming the great test, his illness, to finally come out purified:

*Job 23:10 "But He knows the path I follow. When He tests me, I will come out pure as gold in His eyes. 10 My foot has remained loyal to His steps, His path I followed. And He has not turned me away."*

The text shows us very clearly that showing patience in adversity cleanses a servant of sins and makes him as valuable as pure gold. It is obvious that Jesus told the paralytic that his sins were forgiven by God for having overcome the test that was his illness. Let us repeat what was stated earlier. Throughout all the books of the New Testament, Jesus never told anyone else that his or her sins had been forgiven<sup>55</sup>. And as specifically verified, in the only case, he said it to an ill person.

It is, therefore, never the case that Jesus says that he himself has the power to forgive the sins of a person who is ill and has already been forgiven by the command of God. This means that we dismiss the historicity of Mark 2:10. After we observe the fact of forgiveness in Mark, we see the second and last case in the Gospel of Luke when Jesus tells Mary Magdalene that her sins «have been forgiven» (Luke 7:48).

At first, we chose not to include the information provided by the writer of this gospel in this chapter. However, Luke's information supports our argument even more and, therefore, in the academic field, it is valid because it has met the *criterion of difficulty*. According to 8:2 of the same gospel, Mary has suffered a mental illness and has been cured afterwards by an exorcism performed by Jesus. Therefore, she fulfills the condition of receiving God's forgiveness as we explained in the previous paragraphs. It cannot be a coincidence that in all the gospels, the only two people that were told by Jesus that their sins had been forgiven have illness in common.

Before concluding, we should mention an argument that supports what we have pointed out earlier. James, who would succeed the Nazarene as the head of the Church of Jerusalem, stated that the sins of those who had the patience of Job in times of illness would be forgiven. (James 5:11-15)

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<sup>55</sup> It would be a shame if Jesus 'had forgiven' the sins of only one person in front of all of his followers and discriminated against the others.

Taking into account everything that we have explained before, we can rule out the possibility of the divinity of Jesus, which was attributed to him because of his supposed *power to forgive* people's sins. According to the information provided in the gospels, Jesus did not forgive the sins of anyone who was in good health, but informed people who were sick that their sins had been forgiven by God as compensation for their suffering when they were ill.

## The birth of Jesus

This chapter is of the utmost importance regarding the attribution of divinity to Jesus. We will consider the sources of the account of the miraculous birth of Jesus, conceived by a virgin, and we will compare this with the conclusions from previous chapters, keeping in mind the multiple modifications of the Evangelists Matthew, Luke and John.

Jesus' miraculous birth does not appear in the first book of the canonical four. We will later study the possible reasons for the omission by the author of the Gospel of Mark, but for now we will mention that this event is indeed found in the Gospel of Matthew, which is the first gospel, located at the beginning of the printed versions of the New Testament for obvious theological reasons. Let us see what the author of the Gospel of Matthew says concerning our topic:

*Matthew 1:19 "And her husband, Joseph, being a just man, did not want to defame her, yet he wanted to leave her secretly. 20 Thinking about this, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in his dream, saying: Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to accept your wife Mary because what is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21, and she will bear a son, and you will call him Jesus because he will save your people from their sins. 22 All this happened to fulfill what the Lord said through the prophet that said: 23 Behold the virgin will conceive and bear a son, and you will call him Emmanuel, that stated, is: God with us. 24 And Joseph, waking up from the dream, did what the angel of the Lord had ordered, and he accepted his wife. 25 And he knew her not until she gave birth to her first-born son and called him Jesus."*

As we said previously, all the Gospels have a theological purpose and the accounts are presented to fit the theological points of view of the Evangelists. In these verses of Matthew, which are found at the beginning of his gospel, we observe four theological objectives:

- 1) Jesus is the Messiah (because he is the son of David).
- 2) Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary.
- 3) Jesus is God (the meaning of the name Emmanuel=God with us).
- 4) Jesus will save the world from its sins (by forgiving people's sins<sup>56</sup> or his death on the cross).

Once this information is understood, we also remember that, chronologically, the authors of the Gospels had each made certain changes from the preceding Gospel and, in this way, today's Christian

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<sup>56</sup> We have already resolved this problem in the previous chapter by making it clear that Jesus did not forgive anyone for their sins while he was alive.

doctrine was *perfected*. Since these verses in Matthew are not found in the Gospel of Mark, we begin to suspect the inclusion of the event of Jesus' miraculous birth<sup>57</sup> and all subsequent information that is provided at the same time. We have various points to examine:

1) Jesus as the son of David

If we read the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, we will observe that it starts with the mention: "*Book of origin of Jesus Christ (Jesus - Messiah), son of David, son of Abraham.*" The exposition of the idea that Jesus was the son of David is crucial for Matthew, considering that the awaited Anointed One of the Jews who would restore God's temple would have to come to power *from the loins of David*.<sup>58</sup>

Having said that, as Mary is not a descendant of David, Matthew enters the following verse to establish, one way or another, the bloodline between Jesus and the father of Solomon:

Matthew 1:16 *"And Jacob begat Joseph, husband of Mary, from whom Jesus was born, he who is called Christ (the Messiah)."*

It seems this was still not clear evidence that Jesus fitwas the awaited Messiah, considering the fact that if he was not conceived by Joseph, he would not be a direct descendant of David and this would create an enormous problem for Christianity. For this reason, in verse 5 of his second chapter, Matthew must introduce information about Jesus' place of birth in Bethlehem, as it also appears in numerous apocryphal gospels because, in the Old Testament, the leader of Israel would have been born in Bethlehem.<sup>59</sup>

But the problem does not end here. The majority of historical testimonies inform us that Jesus was known as Jesus of *Nazareth* in his era. This meant that Jesus was born in the town of Nazareth. This would certainly pose a threat to the Pauline Church and would have to be resolved as quickly as possible. The author of the Gospel of Matthew had not explained the reasons for the birth of Jesus of Nazareth in Bethlehem. Let us look at Luke's Gospel and the information it provides us:

Luke 2:4 *"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and the family of David, 5 to enroll together with Mary, who was recently married to him, and was pregnant. 6 And it happened that while they were there, her days of pregnancy were completed."*<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> We want to remind the reader that with this we are not criticizing the historicity of whether Jesus was born to a virgin. The point is to discover the theological purpose behind the existing manner of exposition in Matthew.

<sup>58</sup> 2 Samuel 7:12

<sup>59</sup> Micah 5:1

<sup>60</sup> Although Christian theologians attempt to defend the census, many historians have sufficient evidence that shows that the census that Luke mentions never took place in Bethlehem in the era in which Jesus was allegedly born. Knowledge

With this new information, Luke apparently solved the problem of explaining why Jesus was called Jesus of Nazareth although he had not been born there. But the difficulties do not end there. The geographical distance of the shortest route between these two localities is seventy miles. The journey would take a woman about to give birth and riding on a donkey a minimum of seven days. Also, although there is no information in the four canonical Gospels, one has to realize that, according to other sources, Joseph was an elderly man.<sup>61</sup>

The point that really interests us here is not the birthplace of Jesus, but whether or not he is a descendant of David. In the following point, we will see how Luke resolved this problem in an ingenious way. But for now, we will conclude this point with what the Gospel of John says about this miraculous birth.

The reader will guess what information the Gospel of John provides concerning the miraculous birth: Nothing. As usual, the difficulty of the contributions of Matthew and Luke concerning Jesus' birth in Bethlehem caused the anticipated reaction of John on this topic. Furthermore and surprisingly, a supposed argument among people about whether the Messiah had to come from Galilee or Bethlehem is mentioned in verse 7:41. According to this information from the Evangelist, the Jews were wrong in waiting for the Messiah in Bethlehem.<sup>62</sup> In other words, the Evangelist meant to say: *Although he was born in Galilee, Jesus is the Messiah!*

According to John P. Meier, the reason that John mentioned Galilee instead of Nazareth is simply due to its insignificant geographic location as a remote town in the hills of Lower Galilee. In fact, Nazareth is not mentioned even once in the Old Testament, nor in the history books of Josephus and Philo. With this, we affirm that the writer of John's Gospel took for granted that Jesus had not been born in Bethlehem and this is why he omitted the whole story of the birth in Bethlehem, contradicting Matthew, Luke and other apocryphal gospels.

To conclude our first point, we can sum up by saying that the first theory of the author of Matthew's gospel is of Jesus as a descendant of David. The theory underwent the evolution that we detailed in previous paragraphs and was finally rounded off by the last Evangelist, who did not have any apparent proof of it.

## 2) The conception by the Holy Spirit

As seen in the previous point, the supposed conception by the Holy Spirit put Jesus' position as descendant of David under suspicion, given that according to this information, it was not Joseph who

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of Roman law confirms that it would have been implausible that the emperor would have ordered all the citizens of Judea to go to Bethlehem to register for the census since there were many other easier and more effective methods.

<sup>61</sup> The Protoevangelium of James 9:2, Pseudo-Matthew 8:4, the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary 8:1

<sup>62</sup> John 7:49

impregnated Mary. We also saw that the author of the Gospel of Matthew tried to link Jesus' bloodline to that of King David by other means. Facing the difficulty that the second Evangelist presents, we ask ourselves: Why highlight the birth of Jesus as if it were a result of the impregnation? The answer is simple: Because of Matthew's third theological objective, as mentioned previously, which was the attempt to contribute "another possible argument" to prove that Jesus was God. Also, Matthew thought that if he didn't mention David, the Jews would not accept Jesus as the Messiah. Consequently, he used the circulating information about the miraculous birth of Jesus to associate him with divinity,<sup>63</sup> although no prior information in the Old Testament exists which demonstrates that the Holy Spirit was God Himself.

### 2.1.) Mary's virginity in the prophetic proposal of Matthew:

Our second important point in Matthew's theology is the virginity of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The verse where this is found is Matthew 1:23. The text will make reference to the book of Isaiah:

*7:14 "Thus the Lord will give you a sign, and behold the young woman will give birth to a son that she will call Emmanuel."*

The way in which the Evangelist poses the question of Mary's virginity is by arguing the fact with the support of a reference to the Old Testament.<sup>64</sup> We will analyze the text by dividing it into two points in order to apply the correct hermeneutic criteria:

#### a) Translation criterion:

The text of the book of Isaiah is clear. Below, we have before our eyes, a textual modification by Matthew. In the original text of Isaiah, it is not a virgin but a *young woman* that will give birth. In his Gospel, Matthew very clearly changes the words from *young woman* to *virgin*. Bart Ehrman comments on this topic:

*"Matthew here is quoting the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, which does indeed say that the woman conceiving is a PARTHENOS, a word that by Matthew's day typically meant "woman who has never had sex." Sometimes the word simply means "young woman." And that is definitely*

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<sup>63</sup> There is also information about the miraculous birth of Jesus by the Virgin Mary in the book revealed to Mohammed around 1450 years ago; however, it does not relate Jesus to divinity by this fact since the Nazarene continues being the product of the power of God like any other existing being. In contradiction with all existing theologians, I would interpret the verses revealed to Mohammed in a very different way.

<sup>64</sup> In the Protoevangelium of James, Jesus' miraculous birth from a virgin is not supported by the references from the Torah but is simply mentioned as a miraculous event, nothing more. Furthermore, Jesus is born by the word and power of God, not by conception of the Holy Spirit. This is in contradiction to the Gospel of Matthew yet in concordance with the Qur'an. (11:2) (In the Qur'an, this word was 'Be!')

*what the original Hebrew of Isaiah 7:14 says, where the Hebrew word for “young woman” (ALMAH) is used, rather than the word for “woman who has never had sex” (BETHULAH).”<sup>65</sup>*

In addition to considering linguistic reflections, such as those of Ehrman, that attempt to explain the meaning of the term *almah*, it would suffice to go to Chapter 30 and the lines between 18 and 20 of Proverbs to understand the meaning of the term *almah*. These passages clearly explain that *almah* is actually the polar opposite of a virgin; in fact, the word means a young adultress who, when she fornicates with someone, leaves no trace, just like an eagle that flies through the air or a snake that slithers over a rock. In contrast to an *almah*, a *bethullah* is a true virgin, as one can verify in the book of Deuteronomy 22:16-18. The reader can understand the great difference between these two terms.

In conclusion, Matthew's reference is out of context, according to the criterion of linguistics. This is a translation that is simply incorrect or has been changed to fit a preconceived idea of who Jesus was into the context of the biblical passage. Was Jesus born to a virgin or not? This is not the question we are asking and this is not answer we are looking for. As Bruner points out, many researchers feel that the miraculous birth of Jesus lacks solid historical support.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, there are other testimonies in the Apocrypha that cite Mary's virginity before giving birth. However, our focus here is to have the reader clearly see that the Evangelist's textual modifications were made in order to use the verses of the Old Testament to promote his theological point of view. This would have been the reason that Luke, upon observing this contrived contextualization, did not include Isaiah 7:14 in his book.<sup>67</sup>

#### b) The thematic context of the chapter

As we already know, when interpreting a fragment or entire text, we must read the whole chapter to be able to understand the thematic context to which it refers. Our text corresponds to the fourteenth verse of chapter 7 of the book of Isaiah. Today there are many debates about the meaning of this verse. Here is the summary: If readers take their Old Testament and start to read the chapter from the beginning, they will observe that it is about the history of King Ahaz, who governed Judah between approximately the years 734 and 715 B.C. From the text, readers will understand very clearly, on their own, that during the rule of Ahaz, the enemies of the state of Judah, Syria and Ephraim, joined together, and this caused a tremendous fear in the Jewish King and his people: *his heart shook, as did that of his people, like the trees of the forest shook in the wind.*<sup>68</sup> Because of this fear, Yahweh ordered

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<sup>65</sup> Ehrman, Bart: Why Was Jesus Born of a Virgin in Matthew and Luke?: [<http://ehrmanblog.org/why-was-jesus-born-of-a-virgin-in-matthew-and-luke/>]: para 6: [Dec 24, 2014]

<sup>66</sup> Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: The Christbook, Matthew 1-12* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 37.

<sup>67</sup>If you have the book of Isaiah from the Old Testament available and you find that the cited verse uses the word *virgin* instead of *young woman*, or *the maiden*, it means that your book was translated from a Christian point of view.

<sup>68</sup> Isaiah 7:2

the prophet Isaiah to go and speak with the King of Judah to calm and reassure him.<sup>69</sup> After communicating other revelations, the God of the Jews promises that what the King fears will not take place and that, within sixty-five years, Syria would lose its political power by royal inheritance. Additionally, Ephraim would be destroyed so that it would no longer exist as a nation.<sup>70</sup>

After this message, in verse 10, God commands Ahaz to ask Him for a sign to demonstrate that the promise of the triumph of Judah is true. Ahaz declines to answer because he does not want to tempt God and because he trusts His promise. On seeing Ahaz satisfied with God's promise, Isaiah returns to the people—who were also trembling with fear—and tells them so that they will believe and be reassured like their king, Ahaz: *"Therefore, the Lord will give you a sign. Behold the young woman will give birth to a son who will be called Emmanuel. He will be eating curd and honey when he knows to reject evil and choose good."*

Now it is very obvious that the historical event which occurred in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C had nothing to do with the Nazarene. During those 750 years, no one would have cared if, one day, a virgin would arrive and have a son that she would name Emmanuel. Those people were worried about their era and needed a sign that Yahweh was going to save them from the dangerous situation in which they found themselves.

Let us go back to the previous point about King Ahaz and the promise of God: The name Emmanuel means *God is with us*. As we have clearly mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Jewish people needed a sign that the nations of Syria and Ephraim would not conquer the land of Judah. At this moment Isaiah prophesies the birth of a baby to a young woman they know and the name she will give to her child: Emmanuel. With this he meant: Do not worry, *God is with us*, we will emerge victorious; all enemies will be defeated!

Another important point to consider is that Matthew does not rely upon the fact that Jesus is the Son of God because he is conceived by the Holy Spirit but rather that Jesus will be called Emmanuel. Luke is the one whose gospel is based on the idea that Jesus is the Son of God since Luke, seeing Matthew's error, does not present the information that Jesus is Emmanuel at all. Left without any argument for the divinity of Jesus, Luke attributes the “supposed” virginal conception of Jesus to the Holy Spirit in order to declare that the Nazarene is the Son of God and not God Himself. <sup>71</sup> Thanks to this modification on the part of the third Evangelist, the whole Christian world now believes that

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<sup>69</sup> Isaiah 7:4

<sup>70</sup> Isaiah 7:7

<sup>71</sup> We have described the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit according to Luke with the word “supposed” in quotes. As we continue, we will see the reason for this since we will demonstrate that Luke did not believe that Jesus was actually conceived by the Holy Spirit.

the Holy Spirit is also God, when in the Old Testament it never appears as such and it had never been considered as such in Judaism.

Returning to our topic, the use of the definite article before the phrase, *young woman*, makes it even clearer that Isaiah was telling the crowd about a young woman whom they knew. If Isaiah had said, “*a young woman will bear...*,” then one could consider the slight possibility that this was a reference to Mary. However, it was not like that. The prophecy says *the young woman* (someone that you know). In fact, in some copies of the Old Testament which have been translated by different Christian communities, the phrase, *the young woman* in Isaiah, is replaced by the phrase, *a virgin*. This change reflects a Christian point of view.

### *The name Emmanuel*

After reading Matthew’s forced translation and modifications, another question arises: Was not the young woman to name her son Emmanuel? And what name did Mary give to her son? Was it not Jesus? Where does the name Emmanuel come from? The answer is simple: The name Emmanuel does not exist in any of the Gospels and is not mentioned even once in Paul’s letters. Furthermore, the name Emmanuel was not used even once to refer to Jesus, ever, and it was never used to refer to anyone in the entire Old Testament, except in Isaiah 7:14. Matthew alone is responsible for the introduction of the name Emmanuel in the New Testament, and Pauline Church believers began to name their children Emmanuel centuries after Matthew introduced the name. In conclusion, we can say that even many Christian theologians agree that the introduction of the name is Matthew’s original contribution to his gospel.

### 2.2) Mary’s virginity in the act of the birth of Jesus:

In our second point on Mary’s virginity, it is fitting to remember the absence of this miraculous event in the first Gospel, that of Mark. If we analyze the verses where Matthew presents what happened, he mentions the moment of conception of Jesus by intervention of the Holy Spirit. The text is clear. Let us have a look:

Matthew 1:18 *"The birth of Jesus Christ (Messiah) was like this: With his mother recently married to Joseph, she discovered she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband, Joseph who was a just man, did not want to defame her; he wanted to leave her secretly."*

Now let us read the equivalent of this account in the Gospel of Luke:

Luke 1:30 *"And the angel told her: 'Do not be afraid, Mary, because you have found grace before God. 31 Behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus' ... 34 Mary said to the angel: 'How can that be, given that I am a virgin?' 35 The angel responded, saying: 'The Holy Spirit will come over you, and the power of the Most High will cover you in His*

*shadow; this is why the holy one that will be born will be called Son of God. 36 And behold, your relative Elisabeth has also conceived a child in her old age, and this is her sixth month, she who was called infertile. 37 Because nothing is impossible for God.’ 38 So Mary said: ‘Behold the servant of the Lord; be it done unto me according to your word. And the angel left her presence.’”<sup>72</sup>*

As we have already proven on numerous occasions, Luke's modifications which were done to try and remove any possible error, already make us doubt the historicity of his gospel and his book, The Acts of the Apostles.

Let's remember that in the Gospel of Matthew, it was the Holy Spirit that impregnated Mary and for this reason, Jesus' stepfather, Joseph, according to this author, wanted to keep the circumstances of the pregnancy a secret so as not to create a scandal. However, reading Luke's text, it is in no way understood that the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary nor was it suggested that Mary became pregnant before she “supposedly” shared a bed with Joseph.

Verse 31 only mentions the moment when the angel delivers the good news that Mary will have a child. In verse 34, Mary asks how it will come to be, given that she still has not physically been with any man, including her husband. In verse 35, the angel's promise continues, and the coming of the Holy Spirit is announced, but there is still no indication that it will be the Holy Spirit that will impregnate Mary. Luke's choice of words is extraordinary, but the reader who meticulously examines the details will observe that at no point is impregnation by the Holy Spirit mentioned. The good news only consists of the arrival of the Holy Spirit and not the conception, nor do we understand that the event of conception had been already established in any way since it is only a promise, but—as we said before—this agreement is not even to inform Mary that her son will be conceived *by* the Spirit.<sup>73</sup>

In verses 35 and 36, Elisabeth, the wife of Zechariah, who conceived her child when she had been infertile, is mentioned. The positioning of this fact among Luke's lines is very important, given that no one thought that John the Baptist was conceived *by* the Holy Spirit. Why does the reader believe that Luke put this verse here? In the same way that the angel announced the miraculous birth of her

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<sup>72</sup> In order not to repeat and add to the length of the chapter, I have omitted the verses that are not related to the child's conception. Those interested can consult the New Testament.

<sup>73</sup> To have a son conceived by the Holy Spirit is not the same as the Holy Spirit coming upon a person. Let us look at some examples in the N.T. related to this point:

Acts 2:1-4 *"When the day of Pentecost was completed, they were all gathered in the same place. Suddenly a noise came from the sky like that of an impetuous gust of wind, which filled the whole house that they were in. And some tongues appeared as fire that separated and came to rest upon each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit allowed them to."*

John 20:19 *"Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 Those whose sins are forgiven will be forgiven; and those whose sins are retained, will be retained."*

While in our first example we have the information that the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles to teach them the tongues of fire, in the second example we see that once Jesus was resurrected, he sends the same spirit to his disciples. Therefore, the coming and receiving of the Holy Spirit upon people is not understood as conception in any of these cases. Moreover, as it is mentioned in the study, even "the coming" of the Spirit is only a promise and not a fact.

son, John, to Elisabeth when she was past her childbearing years, he now announces to Mary: *"For the moment you are a virgin, but you will have a son later."* What is the difference between this verse and what a father says to his daughter, a five-year-old virgin who will one day have children? The mention of the family of the Baptist is at no point understood as if Zechariah had a son without having intimate marital relations with his wife, Elisabeth. The angel informs Mary that she will have a child in the same way as Elisabeth had her child (having intimate relations with Zechariah), and Mary will do the same with Joseph. Although Luke does not mention the name of Jesus' stepfather, he shines light on the possibility of understanding that the child born will be Joseph's. In the last verse, Mary asks that God's will be done and the angel leaves Mary's presence. The future arrival of the Holy Spirit is only a promise and subsequent verses no longer mention the arrival of the Spirit. The conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit remains a question without an answer. And the topic is not mentioned until the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. (Luke 2:7). Luke leaves it open.

Since Gospel of Luke says absolutely nothing about the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, this is why he omits the information provided by Matthew in 1:19: *"And her husband, Joseph who was a just man and did not want to defame her, he wanted to leave her secretly."* This sentence was a threat for Luke. It seems he thought that Joseph was the father of Jesus. This is why he added the verse: "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow," given that for Luke God meant to say: "Do not worry Mary! No one will see you or think that the child is Joseph's. The power of God will cover you with its shadow."

What is the theological purpose behind Luke's modification? Let us philosophize about that. The theological purpose behind Matthew's gospel was to try to present Jesus as a semi-divine man. By calling the child Emmanuel, he thought that he would easily achieve his theological objective. Furthermore, as we saw before, with the mention of the Holy Spirit, he contributed another possible argument to support this. In fact, as we have noted on other occasions, all the textual modifications in Matthew accomplish this objective perfectly, so much so that all the Christian churches of the world print the New Testament with his gospel first. However, for Luke, the non-participation of Joseph in the birth of Jesus would eliminate the possibility that Jesus was the awaited King of Israel since Joseph was supposedly a descendant of David through his son Solomon. Luke, upon seeing that Matthew had not been able to resolve the problem of Jesus' genealogical line, works it out in an extraordinary way, as we have previously explained: Luke meant to secretly say that Jesus was a descendant of King David because he was the biological son of Joseph, who was a direct descendant of David through Solomon. However, at the same time, Luke says that God hid this information once Mary had conceived her son while having marital relations with Joseph.

If we consider the explanation from Luke's point of view, we can say that Luke's modification differs completely from the Christology that is practiced today. According to Luke, Jesus was not born to a virgin and, therefore, there is no miraculous birth. This also means that Mary is not

impregnated by the Holy Spirit but by her husband, Joseph, which means that Jesus is not "*The Son of God*."<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, without Luke's gospel, Jesus is no longer Jesus Christ since he is not Jesus the Messiah, descended from the line of David.

In addition to what was said before, there is another fact that is even stranger, one that could even be considered shocking from the current theological point of view which accepts Jesus as «The Messiah who is the direct descendant of David.» We arrive at this fact by considering the following question: What does Mark say about «Jesus the Messiah, Son of David»? We can consider the answer below:

First of all, we remember that the Gospel of Mark does not provide any information about the birth of Jesus. If readers study the passages where Jesus appears as the «Son of David», they will see that in Mark no information exists that provides a genealogical link between the father of Solomon and the Nazarene. Unfortunately, the only two direct proclamations of «Jesus, Son of David» come specifically from *unclean spirits*.<sup>75</sup> Mark 11:10 affirms this information, since it contains the original version of the *The Triumphal Entry* that also appears in Matthew 21:9 in the form of: «Hosanna to the Son of David!» In Mark's parallel account of this event (11:10) we see that the entity that «comes» is not «Jesus, the Son of David,» but «The Kingdom of our father David.» Mark never states that Jesus, «the Son of David» is an actual lineal descendant of David. However, in passages 12:35-37, he tries to explain why Jesus should be accepted as «Son of David» – because of Jesus' mission to establish the Kingdom of God.

All the previously mentioned explanations lead us to the conclusion that the Gospel of Mark's theological purpose is different from that of the Gospel of Matthew's. In the same way, the purpose of Luke's gospel is different from Matthew's. The author of Mark continued his tradition of presenting a human Jesus, while Matthew takes advantage of the "echoes" of Jesus' miraculous birth in order to attribute a part of his divinity to him. Luke, however, has a less defined stance than Matthew, so much so that he even lets us know that he did not believe in the Immaculate Conception by the Holy Spirit but instead used his "echo" to "prove" the divinity of Jesus.<sup>76</sup> For Luke, the Messianic identity of the Nazarene was much more important than whether Jesus had been born to a virgin, and Luke does not think twice about taking liberties with the presentation of the event. Therefore, his gospel would not be suitable for consideration in the field of Christology. Furthermore, the reader who comes to the Gospel of Mark to connect Jesus' lineage to King David would be completely disappointed since Mark does not try to explain that the Nazarene was a direct descendant of King David. For the first Evangelist, the link between Jesus and David is spiritual and not dependent on a bloodline. After

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<sup>74</sup> Although we remember that for Matthew the impregnation by the Holy Spirit does not make Jesus the Son of God.

<sup>75</sup> Mark 10:47-48.

<sup>76</sup> Because of this, Matthew calls Jesus God and Luke calls him the Son of God.

carefully reading the Gospel of Mark, only people who may have not read the text closely enough would conclude that Jesus is the literal Son of David.

With all of these explanations, it becomes evident that there is a need for a rereading of these Gospels, and of the many analytical studies concerning them, from the point of view that there are different theological interpretations among them.

## Master Jesus, a Jew who worships Yahweh

In the previous chapters we confirmed that the Gospel of Mark, the first book of the four canons of the New Testament, does not represent Jesus as a divine or semi-divine being in any of his statements. We also confirmed the evolution and apotheosis that Jesus underwent, thanks to the retouching and modifications of the previous Evangelists in accordance with their theological objectives.

In this chapter we will present the human Jesus who was just like any other person with their faults. He was a Jewish master teacher who never stopped worshipping Yahweh at any time. Next we will present the context that we will study, case by case, and afterwards we will briefly explain each point:

- 1) Jesus sinned.
- 2) The wisdom of Jesus was limited just like any other man.
- 3) Jesus was a human like any other.
- 4) Jesus served Yahweh.

Now let's analyze these points:

- 1) Jesus, just as any other man, made mistakes.

Reading this chapter could affect the sensibilities of a Christian believer, but internal analysis of the scriptures fully confirms this reality. Let's look at our first passage:

*John 8:3 "Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery to him; and putting her in the middle, 4 they told him: 'Master, this woman has been caught in the very act of adultery. 5 And in the law Moses commanded us to stone such woman. You, what do you say?' 6 They said this tempting him, to be able to accuse him. But Jesus, bending to the ground, wrote in the earth with his finger. 7 And as they insisted, he stood up and told them: 'Let he of you who is without sin be the first to cast a stone at her.'"*

In this account we don't know if the paralyzed man that Jesus had cured and told of the forgiveness that he received was present or not. Because if he was, the woman would be stoned according to Jesus' command, as he wanted someone without sin to throw the first stone.

According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said: *"Do not think that I came to overturn the law or the prophets: I did not come to overturn but to fulfilll."* (5:17) Mark, however, is much harsher about

this aspect (9:43-50). Moreover, Jesus always criticized hypocrisy. What does this have to do with our text of study?

As can be perfectly understood, Jesus who came to fulfill the law to its extreme, when faced with the insistence of his adversaries, would have ordered the execution of the adulterous woman. Returning to our point of departure, if the formerly paralyzed man had been present, the woman would have assuredly been dead, Jesus' wish for the fulfillment of the law having been obeyed. But fortunately it was not. Now we ask ourselves: if Jesus wanted the fulfillment of the law and wanted someone without sin to throw the first stone, why did he not throw the stone himself? The answer is simple: Jesus himself did not fulfill the condition. Otherwise, it would have been an order for the fulfillment of the law without Jesus himself fulfilling it, and this would mean hypocrisy, something we cannot imagine of the Nazarene. Jesus wanted to fulfill the law but, at the same time, save the woman and, therefore, he chose to respond wisely, in agreement with essence of the manner in which he believed in Yahweh. This event demonstrates that Jesus did not come to overturn the law but to perfectly fulfill it by liberating people from hypocrisy. Last, we said that as a man of his word, Jesus himself did not even carry out the act of stoning because not even he met the requirement of being without sin.

In our second passage we will quote the Gospel of Mark:

Mark 1:4 *"He baptized John in the desert, and preached the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins... 9 It was said in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan."*

Mark comments that Jesus was baptized by the man who baptized people who repented of their sins. This is more clear evidence that Jesus, like any human, had committed sins during his life of which he repented. To open a new page in his life, he went to the Baptist to be baptized. This does not mean to say that once Jesus repented he committed more sins. This we cannot know, but to convert him from there into a divine man who had, since his childhood, never committed any sins, is the work of the author of the Gospel of Matthew and later, as we will see, of Luke and John. But before quoting Matthew, we will mention a very interesting fact: God's choice of Jesus for the great mission, according to Mark's Gospel, begins exactly here, once Jesus has repented of his sins and has been baptized by John. The group of Christians called *Adoptionists* were inspired by precisely this fact<sup>77</sup>, affirming that Jesus is only an adopted son of God, in the sense of having a metaphorical parental relationship and not a literal one.<sup>78</sup>

Seeing the parallel account in Matthew, it does not surprise us to encounter the Evangelist's new contribution. Supposedly now, John the Baptist insists on being baptized by Jesus and not the reverse

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<sup>77</sup> Antonio Piñero, *Los cristianismos derrotados* Madrid:Edaf., 2007, p. 47

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

because, according to the author, John had the duty to be baptized by Jesus. (Matthew 3:14) But finally, facing "so much insistence," Jesus convinces the Baptist by saying *because this way all justice is fulfilled*. (verse 15). With these inventions, Matthew not only anticipates God's choice of Jesus to fulfill His great mission before he meets John, but also explains the reason for the baptism of Jesus: *to fulfill all justice*<sup>79</sup> and not *the forgiveness of the sins of Jesus*. Matthew is again working to make Jesus divine by altering the Gospel of Mark.

Faced with Matthew's inconsistency, the third Evangelist, Luke, totally eliminated the information that John baptized sinners (Luke 3:21). For Luke, all people were baptized, not only those who had repented and wanted to start a new spiritual life. On the other hand, the fourth Evangelist, John, does not even mention that Jesus was baptized by John. He makes a play on words to avoid any suspicion that could be generated regarding sin about the origins of Jesus.

Before finishing, we will discuss the account of the temptation of Jesus by Satan as our third point. As we well know, Satan cannot tempt anything other than humans because of their ability to accept his invitation to sin. For this reason, he would not waste time with beings that do not have this weakness. This is to say that Satan's motivation for tempting Jesus was this open door. The temptation of Jesus by the devil takes place just after Jesus' repentance with the Baptist in the Gospel of Mark 1:13. The first Evangelist only gives the information that Jesus went to the desert for forty days after his baptism. Around the year 70, when only the first of the four canonical Gospels existed, that of Mark, any reader could have imagined that Jesus, as a normal and sinning man, repented of his sins and went to the desert in search of spiritual growth.<sup>80</sup> However, the parallel to this account in the Gospel of Matthew underwent an evolution to the point that it is not the repentant man who resists the temptation of Satan, but God made man Himself. (Matthew 4:7). Matthew, to eliminate suspicion about the human nature of Jesus regarding sin, launches a new hypothesis as contrary reasoning<sup>81</sup>. Matthew manages to eliminate the possibility that Jesus was a repentant human with the possibility

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<sup>79</sup> The previous mention of the birth of John the Baptist prior to Jesus is precisely to justify the *fulfillment* of this *justice* since he was born before Jesus and in order to fulfill the ethic of the order of preference, Jesus would have to be the first baptized by John and not the other way around. In this way, Matthew eliminates Mark's option, that Jesus was baptized by John due to his sins.

<sup>80</sup> Retreats to the desert and the practice of ascetic life were considered paths for spiritual growth in Judaism during the time of Jesus. There are numerous sources of information about the life of Gnostics. In fact, John the Baptist was a famous gnostic in his time. The same tradition exists in Islam, called Sufism. According to some *tariqas*, it is necessary to take the hand of the *sheij* (master) to receive *tauba* (repentance). Afterwards, the disciple carries out the *riazat*, which is the practice of drinking little, eating little and no meat nor derivations such as milk or cheese, speaking little, sleeping little on hard beds, showering with cold water, etc. It is as if one went to the desert but stayed in his house. At the end of the forty days, spiritual growth and never returning to the world of sin is expected.

<sup>81</sup> One of the ways to lie successfully is to use a strong affirmation as contrary argumentation.

of sinning again. Therefore, it is now Satan who commits the error of tempting his "God" and not because he knew of Jesus' weakness beforehand.<sup>82</sup>

To conclude, all of the arguments made above demonstrate that Jesus was a person who made errors like any normal man before being baptized and growing spiritually in the desert. Once having repented and grown as a person, he began his mission of preaching his message. Satan even tempted him again after his repentance of sin because he knew his weak points. Who could know if he would sin again or not? We will have the answer from him himself as to whether or not he returned to the earth again.

2) The limited wisdom of Jesus:

2.1) One of the characteristics of God is that His prediction is never wrong since this would mean that He is an imperfect God who does not have sure knowledge of future events. Let us look at the contrast with Jesus who was wrong about his predictions:

Mark 13:30 *"Truly I tell you that this generation will not pass away until all of these things are done."*

Here Jesus was telling his disciples that the world would end and that their generation would see it all with their own eyes. However, none of his disciples saw anything he spoke of, and 2000 years later, we are still waiting for the promised days.

2.1) Another of the most emphasized characteristics of God in monotheist religions is His unlimited wisdom which includes all knowledge. Precisely one of the limitations that we have as humans is our lack of knowledge about the future. We will see that Jesus was subject to the same ignorance.

Mark 13:32 *"Yet no one knows the day and the hour, not even the angels, nor the son, but only the Father."*<sup>83</sup>

2.2) It is possible that many of us know that watermelons ripen in summer. We know that strawberries, cherries, and apricots are grown in summer. On the other hand, it is possible that we do

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<sup>82</sup> We have to ask the following question because of logic: Knowing Jesus from his birth, how has Satan not already learned that the Nazarene, as much as he insisted, was not going to commit a sin? Why spend his time and energy in trying to tempt him? The reason is simple: Because Jesus, before his baptism by John, sinned by listening to the whispers of Satan and he came to him at his weakest. It was not said for nothing: The Spanish proverb says, "*Más sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo.*" - "The devil knows more due to his old age than to his being the devil."

<sup>83</sup> In its parallel, Matthew, in 24:36, cloaks the "*nor the son*" part, intending to conceal Jesus' ignorance about the future. On the other hand, Luke, in his Gospel, totally eliminates the information that only God has knowledge of the future. (Luke 21:32)

not know in which season dates mature, given that they are not common fruit in our society. Something similar happened to Jesus with figs:

Mark 11:12 *"On the next day, when they left Bethany he was hungry, 13 and seeing a fig tree from afar that had leaves, he went to see if there might be something there; but, when he arrived at the tree, there were nothing but leaves because it was not the season for figs."*

This account completely contradicts the fact that Jesus had divine wisdom. Here we again see that he erred as any human would do.<sup>84</sup>

### 3) Jesus like any other human:

Just like all humans, Jesus had his weaknesses. He got tired<sup>85</sup>, slept<sup>86</sup>, cried<sup>87</sup>, sweat<sup>88</sup>, and he too was saddened and angered by the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees.<sup>89</sup> He became thirsty<sup>90</sup>, he became hungry<sup>91</sup> and ate and drank.<sup>92</sup> Jesus also received the consolation of an angel to be comforted.<sup>93</sup>

On the other hand, we see that, like any other human, the origin of Jesus' power was the Father: *"And He also gave him the power to judge as he is the Son of man."*<sup>94</sup> According to monotheist beliefs, the Sent, or a prophet chosen by God, can possess supernatural powers such as the ability to perform exorcisms. What is deduced in the N.T. is that God gave this kind of power to Jesus as well as to other great miracle workers. At the same time, according to the words of Jesus, if God had not given him these powers, he would not have been able to perform any of his miracles. Let us look at Jesus' affirmation of this:

John 5:30 *"I cannot do anything alone..."*

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<sup>84</sup> The parallel to this account is found in Matthew 21:19, of course, with the deletion of the phrase *because it was not the season for figs*. The reason is that the writer of the Gospel of Matthew thought: "How could Jesus not know that it was not fig season?" Furthermore, Matthew adds a curse, which is nonexistent in Mark, a curse which causes the tree to wither from the roots up, punishing the tree as if it were at fault for not bearing fruit even though it was not the season when the fig tree would normally bear fruit. Luke, however, shows us this account, not as something that Jesus did when he was with his disciples in Bethany but only as a parable that Jesus relates to his disciples.

<sup>85</sup> John 4:6

<sup>86</sup> Mark 4:38

<sup>87</sup> John 11:35

<sup>88</sup> Luke 22:44

<sup>89</sup> Matthew 22:18, 23:13, etc.

<sup>90</sup> John 19:28

<sup>91</sup> Mark 11:12

<sup>92</sup> Mark 2:16

<sup>93</sup> Luke 22:43

<sup>94</sup> John 5:27

However, everything was possible for the Father as reflected in Mark 14:36 *"And he said Abba, Father, everything is possible for You."*

Another point to mention is Jesus' rejection when they tell him that he is good:

Mark 10:17 *"Setting out on his way, a man came running, and kneeling down before him, he asked: 'Good master, what will I do to inherit eternal life?' 18 And Jesus told him: 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.'"*

Jesus specifically tells them not to call him "good" because this attribute is God's alone.

4) Jesus praised God:

Is it possible for God to praise Himself? Let's look at the passages from the Bible where Jesus, like any man and great spiritual master, worshiped God:

Mark 14:35 *"Going forward a little, he fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, that hour would be passed away from him."*

As we can see here, like any human when we feel sorrow, we pray that God will free us from our hardships, and many times we prostrate ourselves as did Jesus.<sup>95</sup> He asked the Father to take away his hardships.

According to Matthew 11:25, Jesus praised the Father, *"In that time, Jesus said, replying: 'I praise you, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth...'"*

In conclusion, we observe that Jesus, with all of his faults and needs, served and praised God and did not allow others to attribute qualities of God to him such as being called *good*, for example.

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<sup>95</sup> We previously mentioned that falling to the ground was not necessarily a sign of worshiping someone; however, the action of falling to the ground and praying is considered a religious act.

## Conclusions

- 1) It is demonstrated that Mark, the first Gospel written among the canons, shows that Jesus was a human with his errors and faults, without sharing substance with God, a son of God who was chosen to complete the greatest mission in the history of mankind, the select servant that completely depended on the strength and wisdom of his God.
- 2) The Gospel of Mark underwent significant theological changes in Matthew and Luke. The human Jesus, the Jewish Master who walked with his companions, went through an apotheosis and was transformed into a demi-god in the Gospels that followed Mark.
- 3) We have observed that the source of information for the Gospel of Luke was not only Mark but Mark and Matthew, as Farrer proposed in his Theory. The contribution of our study to Farrer's theological thesis is that Matthew as well as Luke not only copied existing material from the Gospels that preceded them but also interpreted them in a new way by introducing new events in order to offer a new theological understanding of Jesus. In the same way, although John's Gospel has a different structure, it is impossible that he would not have previously read these Gospels in order to obtain some useful information and thereby compose his Gospel. This creates a new perspective that from here on in I baptize with the name: THE THEORY OF THE EVOLVING GOSPELS.
- 4) Now the reason that the Gospel of Matthew appears as the first of the four New Testament Gospels becomes perfectly clear. Readers, after finishing Matthew's account, continue on to the next Gospel with the idea of Jesus' divinity firmly planted in their minds. Because of this, the reader is not aware of the tremendous theological changes between the two gospels. If the Gospel of Mark had been the only one written, it is doubtful that people in the world of Christianity today would worship Jesus or call him «*the* Son of God,» since in Mark's gospel the only ones who do this are «the unclean spirits».
- 5) Last, we have analyzed the texts that could have been historical in order to verify the nature of the essence of Jesus and have decided that neither by Mark's first Gospel nor by logic can we conclude that Jesus was God, or *the* Son of God but rather a human being who repented of his sins, who continued being a human with his mistakes, who searched for sincerity, had the gift of prophesy and performed supernatural deeds like his great predecessors did, with the aim of teaching those around him the way of the God that he worshiped and venerated.

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