

## THE HISTORICAL JESUS: A Comprehensive Guide

Gerd Theissen & Annette Merz

SCM 1998 (German 1996)

*This is a massive, scholarly, work, reaffirming Jesus the man of history, against an earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century emphasis on his divinity which teetered on an authoritarianism. Theissen and Merz look at all sources especially the interpretation given him by his followers in aftermath of resurrection. To sum up the findings, I place here the short history of Jesus' life which actually appears at the end of the book as a consequence of the scholarship. I then go through the essentials of the book itself in note form.*

### **A SHORT LIFE OF JESUS ~ retrospective.**

b. Nazareth (3/4 BC) Siblings. Elementary education, joining Baptist in his 20s. Baptised in repentance. Forgiveness independent of temple atonement. Went independent stressing Grace without rites of repentance or baptism, and that evil was overcome (exorcisms) Itinerant sharing rule of restored Israel with 12. Special relationship with Magdalene, women disciples unusual. Family thought him mad but joined later.

God was Father and King, although spoke of Kingdom not king. KgdM begins now. Salvation and damnation near and each had responsibility before God (stressed in parables ~ of which he was master). Miracles attributed to him immediately.

Our wills should be governed entirely by God's. Grounded all in Torah with radicalised Love at centre of his ethic and its interpretation. Little time for ritual fundamentalists, sceptical regarding purity codes. Kingdom as a great shared meal.

Distinguish between what he taught to all and to disciples ~ radical ethic of freedom from worldly ties and relaxed/renounced particular Torah.

Close to Pharisees so disputed. Trouble in Jerusalem re provocative denial of Temple. Instituted new rite just before Passover: non-temple meal. Gethsemane (poetic construction?) indicates thought the insurgence of new Israel might come before suffering cross.

Temple want him dead, Romans crucify potential political pretender. Died in April 30AD. Disciples fled leaving some brave women looking from distance.

Appearance to Mary or Peter then several, expressing vindication of Jesus in unexpected manner. So he was Messiah, yes, but a suffering Messiah. Remembered Jesus had given term 'man' (Son of Man) messianic dignity, now interpreted in light of Daniel<sup>7</sup> to mean all power to Jesus.

Christians must therefore remember Jewish roots, be socially responsible, keep beginning dialogue afresh through Jesus.

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## THE QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

The Quest: First came Source Crit. asking if facts were authentic. Then Historical Relativism then Hermeneutical Otherness. We will only consider historical quest.

### FIVE PHASES OF QUEST:

**First Phase:** criticism of Gospel account as historical:

1. Reimarus (1694-1781)  
Distinguished Jesus from **apostles'** faith in Christ. Jesus only in Jewish context. Jesus' disciples stole body – deception. Apostles' teaching of Christ very different from historical Jewish Jesus.
2. Strauss (1808 – 1874)  
Pupil of Hegel. *The Life of Christ (1835)* Took **myth** concept of OT and applied to NT. Gospels were synthesis of rational and supernatural (interventions into nature).

**Second Phase:** an optimistic liberal quest:

1. Bauer separated John from Synoptics.  
Weisse **2 document theory** of Mk & Q.
2. Holtmann sees **Mk 8** as turning point. Personality of Jesus can be discerned.

**Third Phase:** the collapse:

1. Schweitzer *The Quest of the Historical Jesus (1906/10)* Lives were **projections**.
2. W. Wrede 1901. Mark is expression of **community dogma** projected onto unmessianic Jesus.
3. K Schmidt: a sequence of **pericopes** assembled by Mark according to *kerygma*. Not Jesus but kerygmatic Christ. What Jesus said and did not important but what God did in cross & resurrection was. That's what demands

of the Existentialist, a decision. See Paul's letters to see it was this not Jesus' life which confronted the convert.

4. Bultmann said that since Jesus was essential Jewish, Christian theology only arrived with kerygma. He did acknowledge this post-Easter theology was implied in life of Jesus. (this allowed later scholars to look at historical life)

#### **Fourth Phase:** the 'new quest'

Bultmannians explored this **link between post-Easter preaching and life of Jesus** accounts. Clearly link assumed by scriptural writers. We see Jesus calling to decision, critiquing the Law, love of God for sinners, radical grace amidst Torah, call to 'faith'. Led to seeing Jesus in contrast to Judaism. [excursus on how Jewish scholarship denied this]

#### **Fifth Phase:** the Third Quest of the Historical Jesus.

Moved to a sociological interest rather than the 'new quest's' theological/existential interest. **1. Interest in social history 2. Place of Jesus in Judaism 3.**

#### **Non-canonical sources.**

**The Split** within the Fifth Phase into different trends:

- 1 Jesus shaped by Hellenistic influence moves to Wisdom (esp Cynicism) Crossan.
- 2 Jesus the eschatological Jew looks to restoration. EP Sanders.

What's plausible in Jewish context & accounts for rise of Christianity may be history!

#### **CHRISTIAN SOURCES ABOUT JESUS**

- No non-canonical source older than Mark.
- We only know small section of traditions so only non-representative.

**Synoptics:** Q & Gospels ~ Jesus is eschatological Kingdom preacher

**Gospels close to Gnosticism:** John and Thomas ~ Jesus mediates esoteric revelation

**Jewish/Christian Gospels:** Jesus with Ethical accents

**Other Christian sources** have no uniform approach to person of Jesus.

#### NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES ABOUT JESUS

**Josephus.** (37 -100) writes of James the brother of 'Jesus who is called the Christ'

**Rabbinic sources:** bSanh 'Jesus who leads the people astray' 'performed miracles'. Some scholars believe authentic traces of mention in Talmud. Jesus stoned then hung up. Mention of five disciples. Jesus practiced sorcery (miracles). Very bitty.

**Roman Texts:** Jesus founder of Christian Sect. 'Christus'

1. Pliny the Younger (61-120): letter to emperor Trajan. Various sources (women deacons under torture) and rumours: 'made ethical vows' 'not criminals' 'death sentences for Xns'
2. Tacitus: (-120): 'Christus executed under Tiberius'
3. Suetonius (-130): 'Chrestus had stirred up Jews who caused unrest'

## CHAPTER FOUR: EVALUATION OF ALL SOURCES

### Thirteen objections:

[**major examples:** Silence of non-Xn contemporary sources ~ but other big events similar. Paul paints Js as mystical ~ he also makes him fleshy. John is not historical ~ Jn includes earthy bits from synoptics too. Post-Easter has overshadowed the real Jesus ~ pre-easter attitudes still in some parts of synoptics. Kerygmatic tradition is not interested in portraying historical Js ~ kerygma speaks of 'memory' & obviously historical figures also mentioned. Gospels address community needs not historical ~ but some passages do not. OT texts determined the NT account ~ Xns lived in the Bible so bound to use it but not totally determinative. Prophetic sayings placed into mouth of Jesus ~ some not disputed.

## PART TWO: THE FRAMEWORK

### 5: Historical & Religious

Jesus was a marginal figure in complex 'Judaism' in upheaval.

1. Ethical Monotheism
2. Covenantal authority over whole of life
3. Priestly Temple stipulated as only centre, plus Lay led Synagogues
4. Temple Sacrifice (Day of Atonement at its centre) & Lay led Liturgy of Word, the latter being profoundly innovative & looked highly philosophical to outsiders.
5. Ritual symbolism of Circumcision, Sabbath, Food, Purity. (hence separation)

**Hellenism:** 322 Alexander's hegemony but with change in Palestine from Ptolemies to the Seleucids (200) Hellenization of East ended as Rome became ascendant. From

within, the Maccabean anti-Hellenistic Revolt of 167 reformed Judaism bringing new ruling elite to ally with Sadducees against Pharisees (who had originally been their allies). Old aristocracy linked with new forces out of which arose Essenes.

But then the Romans brought a new impetus to Hellenism with Pompey in 63 BC climaxing in Herod I (40-44 BC) His death culminated in three wars between Rome and Jews. Hellenization rampant.

Judas the Galilean's revolt/ John the Baptist/ looking for Israel's ascendancy.

### **Renewal Movements of 2<sup>nd</sup> Cent BC**

200: Jesus ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) was last self-confident book of Judaism at this time. Judaism had not split into factions, developing Wisdom literature over against the heady Hellenism, with Zadokide high priest.

Change from Ptolemies (conservatives) to Seleucids split aristocracy, giving Maccabees their chance. Seleucids wanted pure Mosaic cult but not separatist rituals of circumcision, food, purity codes – a universalist Judaism.

But radicals went too far with Antiochus IV Epiphanes, hence revolt.

Ptolomic conservatives fled to Egypt around 150 BC to a new Temple at Leontopolis.

**Hasmonaeans** (after ancestor Hasmon) were a priestly family allying with religious group called the *Hasidim* as the revolt's military and political wing..

Maccabees increasingly took on Hellenistic style of government away from their original popular base. The Hasidim sued for peace once religious aims of Priesthood and Temple accomplished. Maccabees fought on.

**Essenes:** a Zadokide high priest was forced out by Maccabees so allied with fundamentalists – the 'Teacher of Righteousness'. Priestly purity, calendar, ritual.

**Sadducees:** the remaining conservative elite remained after Ptolomic Egypt temple and Essene alternative temple. They themselves had supported moderate Hellenization. John Hyrcanus allied to them thus driving Pharisees into opposition. Hyrcanus destroyed temple in Samaria. Sadducees recognised only Torah, rejecting new religious notions (demons & eschatology)

105: Galilee conquered by Maccabees under Aristobulus giving Sadducees power in north. Pharisees only had power there later.

**Pharisees:** ‘the precise ones’. They had been persecuted and so when coming to power they initiated bloody purge. Given seat in Sanhedrin alongside Sadducees! Herod increased their power by downing on Sadducees for Hasmonean allegiance. Yet they confronted Herod later. They shaped private sphere in first century. (traditional view is they were founders of rabbinic Judaism)

After death of Emperor Agrippa I (44) Galilee came under direct Roman administration.

There followed a series of prophets reactivating eschatological hope. However only in Jesus, John the Baptist and Jesus ben Ananias is judgement directed against own people. All emphasise Jewish separation norms – except Jesus! Exceptionally, Jesus movement also avoids direct confrontation with Rome.

**Jesus Chronology:** Death of Herod is 6BCE, Quirinius’ time in Syria starts 6AD (the census did not affect Galileans!) Travelling star is not scientific phenomenon. Jesus began career at 30 but common literary device. Final meal a Passover but not allowed outside city? John and Synoptics disagree on Passover meal – John looks good.

### **Geographical and Social Framework:**

Jesus the ‘Galilean’ ~ Freyne argues that Galilee was structurally different from Judaea. Bauer argues that Galilee was then pacified, so Jesus in not political!

**Birthplace: Nazareth** Idea of Bethlehem as birthplace is result of Matthew’s religious fantasy on OT. Nazareth was remote hill settlement (pop 50 – 2000) of hill chalk caves, some having awnings. Local city of Sepphoris destroyed completely by Varus in 4BC. Then Antipas constructed it as HQ before Tiberius. (Jesus speaks from urban experience of ‘hypocrites’ play-actors; talents bank practices; debtors taken distance) Jesus turned to country people.

**Capernaum:** Frontier between Antipas and Philip. Troops, toll station. Lost its importance after 39AD when Antipas deposed. Frontier gave Jesus protection – could slip over it. A fourth cent synagogue suggests an earlier building. So-called Peter’s house is miserable quality, fish hooks found. Decoration show it an early house church.

**Surrounding district:** After Assyrian conquest of Northern Kingdom foreigners settled there. Therefore felt to be ‘Gentile’ (Isaiah 8:23 ‘Galilee of the Gentiles’)

Maccabean Aristobulus I (104-3BC) agrees to help Jews there by invading. When Pompey reorganized Palestine in 63BC allowed Galilee, Judaea and Peraea as adherents of Jerusalem temple cult.

They spoke very local dialect of Aramaic (which slurred the gutturals). Greek and Hbw were written in Jesus' Galilee. Gentiles in minority, but surrounded by Hellenistic city states. Galilee was Jewish enclave!

Antipas made Sepphoris Jewish/Hellenistic city, Tiberias built on a cemetery and adorned it with pictures of animals (non Jewish practice) Rural areas were therefore antagonistic (plus the wealth/poverty divide). Jewish identity under threat where Jesus worked.

**Poverty/Wealth** in evidence: great estates around Sepphoris. Eusebius shows Jesus' family (very)smallholders working own land. Jesus is son of a τεκνον ~ Palestine had little wood so probably stone worker. Absentee land-holders lived in cities. Day/hour labourers. Parables talk of prison for debt (alien law).

**Political tension.** Herod Gt dies Archelaus (4BC-6AD) Judea & Samaria; Philip (4-34) got NE non-Jewish Palestine; Antipas (4-39) had Galilee & Peraea (not contiguous). Archelaus failed so Pilot took over. Freyne argues Galilee not tense but: the Robber War captured arsenal at Sepphoris so Varus destroyed it and massacred thousands. Josephus argues Antipas had Baptist killed to prevent open revolt. Prehistory of many southern revolutionaries is Galilean. However, Jesus appeared in time of *relative* calm, so could adopt non-violent approach.

**Religious Galilee.** Rabbinic literature depicts Galilee as religiously illiterate despisers of Torah. Johana be Zakkai "Galilee, you hate the Torah!"

Temple: majority remained loyal. Tiberias protest against Caligula image in Temple.

Land: Belonged to YHWH. Should not be polluted by Gentiles.

Torah: Pharisees rare in Galilee. Spread slowly. Probably strong adherence to Torah but with strong rural interpretation ~ unlike cities (Jerusalem)

### **PART THREE: ACTIVITY & PREACHING OF JESUS**

**8: Jesus as a Charismatic.** Bornkamm defines J's 'intimacy' as contrast with 'in between' sense of history. For Jesus the time is now! Also in Jesus the reality and authority of God is present now. Also against arid systematisation of Law Jesus

speaks of God's will directly relevant now. Theissen emphasises deviant life-style of the Jesus group. Vermes interpreted Js as charismatic healer. Borg emphasises Js' holiness. Also Jesus offers arresting pronouncement stories ~ a form unheard in Palestine at that time.

[pp 194-234]

We know Jesus mainly from his relationships during his public ministry. His aura was provoking (family thought him mad Mk3:21, and he critiqued family life as subordinate to Kingdom). But his family could have thought themselves Davidic (esp James) which encouraged charismatic style. Jesus directly stimulated by John Baptist ~ maybe taking over some of his sayings. Jesus then became exceptional in prizing grace over judgement ~ so he relativized baptism. 12 disciples was to be restoration not of monarchy but popular rule by a collective. Not retreat into wilderness but into world endorsing unconventional values. Inclusion of women in itinerant group extraordinary.

Js interprets opposition positively. Even absorbs some Pharisaic and Sadducean convictions but refuted upper class politics. Pharisees fade away in the Final Conflict with Temple aristocracy.

Jesus' charisma evident in his person as prophet, miracle-worker, teacher.

### **9. Jesus as Prophet: Jesus' eschatology.**

[pp 240 -274]

Jesus spreads certainty that God's will for the good is establishing itself in world. Opposition is already defeated. Weak will secure rights and sustenance, all secure chance for repentance. Jesus proclaims:

1. New world dawning in midst of old but only future realises full Kingdom.
2. Greater the judgement, the greater promised Salvation. Greater the salvation, the harsher the judgement excluding themselves.
3. God's nature is Father, his instrument is ethical will ~ KgdM of God. Kingdom is (dynamically) his 'reign' but also has stand alone existence. It is not an end in itself.
4. When we are moved to forgive we take part in God's forgiveness ~ God is at work alone but our work participates in God's.

5. Jesus presents theocentric expectation yet a sense of messianic intermediary, especially in Son of Man sayings (if he said them)
6. Kingdom is localised, yet the patriarchs appear to live there. So KgdM is religious expectation with political relevance. It delegitimizes present rule.
7. In eucharist, all participants share in dignity of the host – a share in rule in the Kingdom.
8. Kingdom was not metaphor nor symbol at that time. But did imply gathering of tribes, overcoming Gentiles, a theocracy. Jesus gives it new meaning.
9. Oral prophecy of end time limited to near future and not esoteric. ‘seek Kingdom as you would seek Wisdom’.

Jesus was right about end-times but more elongated in fact. OR Existentialist realisation of end-timers in each person. OR Jesus protests against a survival of fittest evolutionary, offering weak a way to salvation.

#### **10. JESUS AS HEALER: miracle stories**

##### **[pp281 – 309]**

Miracle goes against norm and has religious significance, then understood as effected by a god, not a human. But usually God does not appear in Js’ miracles. With Jesus the difference from miracles of others also is: miraculous power is sometimes attributed to those being healed; and the eschatological interpretation of the miracle. The evil overcome and the power to perform are interpreted in accord with culture:

1. Sickness as fact and social construct. Demons/possession is about losing control of ourselves or environment. Possession is particularly re identity.
2. Miraculous power as fact and social construct. Clearly there were healings, but Jesus does them, not God. God’s power might act through him, but Js does not ask God to act. May be power is scientifically within creation and charismatics are in touch with that – so it does not act ‘against’ but ‘with’ nature. Jesus then gives these religious interpretation.

Today we can: A: treat them as symbols against human distress or political possession. (EXnC is happy to imply such understanding).

#### **11. JESUS AS POET. The parables of Jesus.**

A contemporary genre for Jesus, rabbis later drew on same fund of motifs & images.

Phases of interpretation: 1. Julicher ~ Jesus had 'one-point approach'. 2. Dodd ~ each parable relates the time of Js' ministry as realised eschatology. 3. Jeremias ~ imagery relates to concrete events during Js' ministry. 4. Fuchs ~ Parables are 'speech events' changing people. 5. Crossan ~ stand-alone works of art, not contextually controlled, carrying shocking message. 6. Luise Schottroff ~ Parables spell out new way of living in society. 7. Interpret in context of related rabbinic parables. Only then do Jesus' parables show their unique significance.

[pp 324 – 342]

Unique individual features are subordinate to dominant point of parable.

God can only be spoken of in images and similitudes.

Parable as Sacrament of the Word OR Parable as symbolic 'pointers' to God.

Make you think about God in new ways.

## **12. JESUS AS TEACHER: The ethics of Jesus**

Kittel showed all the ethical statements made by Js are conceivable in Judaism. He intensifies it. Rabbinic texts later than Jesus but contemporary Qumran shows this intensity too. But Jesus adds to their intensification of Torah the radicalisation of Grace which applies to those who are not pious.

Mark and John address Js as Rabbi (not a post-Easter title) seems authentic, but what would it mean? Nazareth probably too small for a school. But a synagogue required a scroll (Torah and prob Isaiah). Jesus could read: 'have you not read?', he taught in synagogues, Jn 7:15 'knows his letters'. Jn Baptist son of priest perhaps educated Jesus?

There was no canon so prob knew part of Isaiah in Aramaic popular form and some apocryphal texts now unknown? Jesus used hermeneutical principles of time: inference from small to large (if God feeds the birds) Also inference of one text upon another as a 'family' link. But Jesus uses scripture to a purpose, others quoted it for its own sake.

Jesus' ambivalence towards Torah: Scholars show that contemporary approach to Torah was not as austere as some assume. Covenant and election preceded Law. Torah was to be lived out, not abstract. Morality of reward rejected. Learning Torah is a joy.

### Relaxation of Norms in the Jesus Tradition:

1. the Sabbath commandment ~prophetic approach of Js. He asked how Sabbath should be kept, EarlyChurch asks whether Sabbath need be kept. Essenes forbade helping animals on Sabbath. Essenes reduced sabbath mile, Pharisees extended it. So there was already a dispute over sabbath.
2. Command to give tithes ~ social obligation priority.
3. command about sacrifice ~ make peace first.
4. command about cleanliness ~ Js seems to have dispensed with baptism.

### So did Jesus go beyond Judaism in preaching?

What was Js' motivation for radicalisation of *Sabbath*? 1. Ethical, 2. To bring in Eschaton? 3. Demonstration of Messiahship? 4. as itinerant, he needed to heal today because he would not be there tomorrow. 5. Provocative behaviour to stimulate?

Jesus represents liberal view of Torah, but not opposed

Intensification of *Torah* in Logia sections vs Relaxation of norms in Narrative sections. Logia tradition sees Sexual intensification – adultery, renounce sexuality  
Narrative tradition sees relaxation – woman in adultery, protects woman ~ given patriarchal privilege of men.

### *Safeguard Jewish Identity* yet invite them in?

Disciples distinguished from Gentiles in: Loving enemies & contrast life-style esp leadership. So intensifies to identify specificity, although relaxes to include marginal groups.

So Repentance is not in regard to Torah but Kingdom ethic in favour of poor.

An ethic of mercy, beatitudes on poor, children admitted, sick and poor received.

Rigorous but accepting

Compels change in behaviour but offers chance to those who have had no chance – others have no need of a physician. Kingdom accepts sinners.

### The Torah read through the Wisdom and Prophets.

Wisdom became hypostasis of God. So Torah took on same pre-existent identity. Also, Jesus working in time of apocalyptic ~ Israel would be power again.

But Js claims: ‘more than Solomon is here.’

For Jesus, against Qumran, repentance is not to obey Torah strictly but to observe mercy of Kgdm, eschatology of Kgdm being ethical action for weak and poor.

Blessed are poor; enter Kgdm as a child; ‘sick and poor are receiving news’

\*Poor offered mercy but disciples offered rigorous ethic (all challenged repentance)

Js offers more concrete interpretation of Torah than Wisdom writings. It is the Torah read in light of prophets. So the command to love is at his heart.

### **The command to love as centre of Jesus’ ethic.**

Did Jesus put two commandments together or later Hellenistic church?

Ethics is more than what we can do, but a sign of what we hope for.

### Extension of concept of ‘neighbour’ to ‘alien’ (Good Samaritan)

Who should be regarded as neighbour is changed to – who proved to love neighbour?

People are not ‘neighbours’ but their loving action makes them so.

Whereas LXX (Lev. says only ‘righteous’ alien, converts, can be loved like this).

Love enemies tradition (Q) authentic. Jesus uses Torah passages to surround this, his basic ethic. Other commands he sees as of less importance (cleanness, family tie).

Title ‘a child of God’ was reserved for Kings and wise men, powerful expected to show magnanimity – now this is for all! Be like your father: God proves to love good and wicked, so we must do same.

So ethical behaviour of disciple participates in transformation of world.

But can his ethical demands be fulfilled by human person? Ethics is a sign of what we hope for.

## **PART FOUR: PASSION AND EASTER**

[pp 405-436]

**JESUS AS FOUNDER OF A CULT.** John Baptist & Jesus expect eschaton so offer sacraments of immediate end-time, not longterm cult. Baptism= final judgement; Eucharist = eschatological meal. (substitute for Temple cultus)

Day before Passover, a meal as his sacrifice as new or renewal of sacrifice. After death the Church interpreted this further. Expresses transformation of humans from asocial to cooperative by sharing and mutually giving life. These time-limited sacraments taken up into history and showed that the promise not tempered by passage of time.

#### **14 JESUS AS MARTYR: the Passion of Jesus**

[pp 440-466]

Tension between rural charismatic vs. urban elite; Jewish renewal vs. Roman rule; proclamation of cosmic change vs. reps of status quo; Rule of God vs. rule of temple aristocrats and Romans.

So before Sanhedrin Jesus mocked as prophet & Temple blasphemy, before Romans for Kingship claim. Not only rulers but ordinary people and disciples did their bit.

Why death? Torah critique may have annoyed but Temple critique brought consequences. Torah only became more central with demise of Temple cult (although Torah legitimised cult) But Jesus is part of the process of Jewish history for when Temple collapsed they all managed to live without it!

Crucifixion showed it naïve to link ethical life and happiness. His death offered church a death which created new community with God. God made resurrection happen so must have been orchestrating the death.

It is no longer God who is to be changed by sacrifice but we are changed. God need not overcome his wrath but us!

New life occurs not through killing (sacrificing) = human request, but through resurrection = God's initiative and challenge to humanity.

#### **THE RISEN JESUS: Easter and its Interpretation.**

[pp 474-502]

Disciples fled to Galilee and experienced Jesus – story relocated to Jm later.

Magdalene tradition soon lost to church in favour of Peter. Large group experiences

of ecstasy interpreted later as appearances. Empty tomb found later and imported. Rationally not historical because has no historical cause. Subjective vision theory.

Marxsen: Ongoing appropriation of the kerygma.

Something had happened to disciples, they described as seeing Jesus; the cause of Jesus goes on as in 'as Father sent me I send you'.

Bultmann's existential approach. Resurrection not myth nor event but offers new self-understanding for reader/hearer. Easter reveals life as radical gift – a creation from nothing. Resurrection is not historical but really did happen! Resurrection is only event after creation which is God's action without human action element. Rn cannot be mediated by human beings but only by revelation accepted in faith.

Pannenberg: Interpretation in terms of universal history. Resurrection is history but only if we see history differently. History is only to be understood from its end point, so only eschatological perspective interprets Resurrection, not presence science.

We have no experience of death but only life till death, so death cannot be understood in terms of our experience thus far of the world. In death we enter realms beyond death, so..?

## **(16) THE HISTORICAL JESUS & THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTOLOGY**

[512-560]

Charisma expressed in nearness to God/Father, transcending Torah without contradicting it, and forgiving sins & healing (God's work). Wished to exercise Messiahship collectively to rule Israel with disciples. *Son of Man* offers human the honorific dignity ~ a human Christology! God's final intervention did not occur as he expected but through resurrection (in faith of disciples) so all has to be reformulated in light of Cross & Easter.

After Easter old titles re-interpreted:

*Messiah* – now in light of suffering and death, old promises to Israel fulfilled and extended to Gentiles. *Son of God* – representative of God in the world so dialogue with God through Jesus. *Son of Man* – Jesus makes this a messianic title. Bestial kingdoms replaced by one initiated by human, so amidst unredeemed world we live as covenanted to God.

Thereafter worshipped as *κύριος*. *Lord* – surpassing other titles but always relating to the Jesus of History thereby denying authoritarianism while accepting of ἐξουσία.

This book reinforces that reading after early 20<sup>th</sup> century liberal excursion into authoritarian stance.

### **A SHORT LIFE OF JESUS ~ retrospective.**

*[this is repetition of the para I have placed at beginning of these notes]*

b. Nazareth (3/4 BC) Siblings. Elementary education, joining Baptist in his 20s. Baptised in repentance. Forgiveness independent of temple atonement. Went independent stressing Grace without rites of repentance or baptism, and that evil was overcome (exorcisms) Itinerant sharing rule of restored Israel with 12. Special relationship with Magdalene, women disciples unusual. Family thought him mad but joined later.

God was Father and King, although spoke of Kingdom not king. Kgdm begins now. Salvation and damnation near and each had responsibility before God (stressed in parables ~ of which he was master). Miracles attributed to him immediately.

Our wills should be governed entirely by God's. Grounded all in Torah with radicalised Love at centre of his ethic and its interpretation. Little time for ritual fundamentalists, sceptical regarding purity codes. Kingdom as a great shared meal. Distinguish between what he taught to all and to disciples ~ radical ethic of freedom from worldly ties and relaxed/renounced particular Torah.

Close to Pharisees so disputed. Trouble in Jerusalem re provocative denial of Temple. Instituted new rite just before Passover: non-temple meal. Gethsemane (poetic construction?) indicates thought the insurgence of new Israel might come before suffering cross.

Temple want him dead, Romans crucify potential political pretender. Died in April 30AD. Disciples fled leaving some brave women looking from distance.

Appearance to Mary or Peter then several, expressing vindication of Jesus in unexpected manner. So he was Messiah, yes, but a suffering Messiah. Remembered Jesus had given term 'man' (Son of Man) messianic dignity, now interpreted in light of Daniel<sup>7</sup> to mean all power to Jesus.

Christians must therefore remember Jewish roots, be socially responsible, keep beginning dialogue afresh through Jesus.