

Three of the “Titles” of Jesus

Introduction

Jesus is given many “titles”, or “designations”, in Scripture. Most of those titles are well known to Christians. However, from what I have seen, the exact meanings of those titles are not very well understood by many Christians.

In other words, some Christians do not understand the *meanings* of some of Jesus’ titles – and that can cause Christians to draw inaccurate conclusions about **who** Jesus actually is.

Of course, it stands to reason that *followers* of Jesus should want to have an *accurate* understanding of his identity. So, let’s examine some of the most common titles that are given to Jesus – and then explore what those titles actually mean.

Three very common titles

First, here are some titles that the apostle Peter gave to Jesus:

Matthew 16:15-17 (ESV):

¹⁵ He [Jesus] said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the **Christ**, the **Son of the living God**.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Acts 2:36 (ESV):

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both **Lord** and **Christ**, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

There are three distinct titles given to Jesus, in the above passages:

- “Christ”
- “Lord”
- “Son of God”

As it turns out, those same three titles are also given to Jesus by the *other* apostles, in numerous places. Here are some examples of this, from John, Paul and James:

John 20:30-31 (ESV):

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the **Christ**, the **Son of God**, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

1 Corinthians 8:6 (ESV):

⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one **Lord**, Jesus **Christ**, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

Galatians 2:20 (ESV):

²⁰ I have been crucified with **Christ**. It is no longer I who live, but **Christ** who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the **Son of God**, who loved me and gave himself for me.

James 2:1 (ESV):

¹ My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our **Lord** Jesus **Christ**, the **Lord** of glory.

There are many, many *other* places in Scripture where those same three titles are given to Jesus as well. So, since those particular titles are so common, it appears worthwhile to take a closer look at them.

The title of “Christ”

The title of “Christ” is probably the *most* familiar title of Jesus, to Christians who live in English-speaking countries. In fact, Jesus is quite frequently referred to as “Jesus Christ” by many Christian churches.

Unfortunately, from my experience, many Christians are not familiar with the *meaning* of the title of “Christ”. In fact, in some cases, Christians are not even aware that Christ is actually a **title**, *at all* - instead, some people think that Christ is simply the last name (surname) of Jesus!

The English word “Christ” comes from the Greek word *Christos*. The word *Christos*, in turn, is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *mashiyach*. (The English rendition of *mashiyach* is “messiah”.)

In any case, *Christos* and *mashiyach* both mean the same thing – their basic meaning is “anointed”; as in “one who has been anointed”. The word “anointed” comes from the Hebrew verb *mashach* – to anoint.

Here are the basic definitions of *mashach* (to anoint), *mashiyach* (messiah) and *Christos* (Christ), from Strong’s lexicon:

4886 mashach maw-shakh’ a primitive root; to rub with oil, i.e. to anoint; by implication, to consecrate; also to paint:—anoint, paint.

4899 mashiyach maw-shee’-akh from 4886; anointed; usually a consecrated person (as a king, priest, or saint); specifically, the Messiah:—anointed, Messiah.

5547 Christos *khris-tos*’ from 5548; anointed, i.e. the Messiah, an epithet of Jesus:—Christ.

As shown above, *mashiyach* and *Christos* both mean anointed – i.e. *Christos* is the Greek “version” of *mashiyach*.

Here is additional information about *mashiyach*, from Strong’s lexicon:

- 1) anointed, anointed one
 - a) of the Messiah, Messianic prince
 - b) of the king of Israel
 - c) of the high priest of Israel
 - d) of Cyrus
 - e) of the patriarchs as anointed kings

So, the title of “messiah” (or Christ) refers to a person who has been anointed – that is, *consecrated for service to God*. In other words, God *chose* the person in question for His service; and then He had that person officially “consecrated”. This consecration *usually* – but not always – begins with a ceremony involving the smearing of oil on the person.

As listed above, the kings and priests of ancient Israel were all *anointed* ones – i.e., they were all messiahs of a sort! So, the title of messiah is **not** unique to Jesus – many other people have held that title as well.

Also note that all of the kings and priests of Israel were *literally* smeared with oil, as part of their initial consecration to God.

Another item that is very interesting from the above list is that Cyrus – i.e., king Cyrus of ancient Persia – was *also* given the title of messiah (anointed)! Here is the verse that contains that title for Cyrus:

Isaiah 45:1 (ESV):

¹ Thus says the LORD to his **anointed**, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped,
to subdue nations before him
and to loose the belts of kings,
to open doors before him
that gates may not be closed:

It is quite interesting that Cyrus is given the title of anointed (i.e., messiah) – because Cyrus was not even an Israelite! Not only that, but Cyrus did **not** have oil smeared on him, as part of his consecration for God’s service. So, evidently there are some cases in which people can become consecrated into God’s service – and therefore, can become *messiahs* – without going through the “usual channels”.

In addition to the kings and priests, the Hebrew Scriptures also speak about one specific, *special* messiah, who will save all mankind from their sins. For example, in Genesis 3:15 God states that the “offspring of the woman” shall “bruise the head” of the serpent. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses tells the Israelites that “God will raise up a prophet like me from among you, from among your brothers – it is to *him* you shall listen”. Finally, in Isaiah 53, the prophet describes – in great detail – the sufferings that this special messiah would undergo, to allow all of *us* to be saved.

Of course, this one specific, special messiah is Jesus – and that is why he is given the title of the Christ (i.e., the Messiah) in the Greek Scriptures. In other words, Jesus was also consecrated into God’s service

– just like the kings and priests of ancient Israel were. In the case of Jesus, though, he was given the completely **unique** role of being the savior of all mankind – something that the ancient kings and priests could never do.

So, from what I can see, Jesus’ title of “the Christ” means: “The one who was *chosen* by God, and *consecrated* into God’s service – in order to become the *savior* of mankind”.

The title of “Lord”

Most Christians are also familiar with the title of “Lord” for Jesus. For example, in English-speaking countries, one will frequently see signs that have “Jesus is Lord” on them.

Once again, though, many Christians are not very familiar with the *meaning* of the title “Lord”, when it is used in reference to Jesus. From what I have seen, the vast majority of Christians believe that the title “Lord” is *completely interchangeable* with the title “God”. In other words, most Christians think that “Lord” and “God” are synonyms – i.e., that they mean the same thing.

Of course, since most Christians think that “Lord” means “God” – and since Jesus is given the title “Lord” – most Christians conclude that Jesus, himself, is actually Almighty God.

One reason why Christians confuse the meanings of “Lord” and “God” is because of the rendition of God’s personal name, in English translations of the Bible. The personal name of Almighty God is written in the Hebrew Scriptures with the four Hebrew consonants yod, hey, vav, hey, as follows (note that Hebrew is written right to left):

יהוה

Those four consonants are often referred to as the “tetragrammaton” – which simply means *four letters*.

Of course, there is an *enormous* amount of debate about how, exactly, the tetragrammaton should be pronounced. Most scholars appear to favor the pronunciation of “Yahweh”. A common Anglicized pronunciation is “Jehovah”.

In any case, there is no question that God does have a personal name – as specified by the four letters above. However, almost all English translations of the Bible do not even *try* to provide a personal name for God. Basically, most English Bible render the tetragrammaton as the word LORD – with small capital letters. As a result, most Christians are not even *aware* that God has a personal name – because English translations have replaced His name with LORD!

Not only that, but by replacing God’s name with LORD, most English translations lead Christians to believe that “God” and “Lord” mean the same thing. That, in turn, causes many Christians to conclude that Jesus is actually God, because one of Jesus’ **titles** is “Lord”.

The Greek word that is rendered as “Lord” in reference to Jesus is *kurios*. Here is Strong’s lexicon on the meaning of *kurios*:

2962. kurios *koo'-ree-os* from kuros (supremacy); supreme in authority, i.e. (as noun) controller; by implication, Master (as a respectful title):– God, Lord, master, Sir.

In other words, the term kurios does not necessarily mean **God** – it simply indicates a person who has been granted a position of authority. Certainly, Jesus has been granted authority by God, as specified by Peter:

Acts 2:36 (ESV):

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both **Lord** and **Christ**, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

In other words, God granted Jesus the title of kurios – lord. That is, God gave Jesus *authority* over us. However, that does not mean that Jesus is actually Almighty God.

After all, consider this – if kurios and God actually *were* synonyms – i.e., if the title of kurios always meant Almighty God – then Acts 2:36 would read as follows:

Acts 2:36 (ESV):

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both **God** (kurios) and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

In other words, if kurios actually meant God, then the above verse would read “**God** has made him **God**“... That doesn’t make much sense, does it?

So, from what I can see, Jesus’ title of “Lord” refers to the fact that God has given Jesus **authority** over us. In other words, God has made Jesus our “master”, or “boss”, if you will.

The title of “Son of God”

Finally, we come to the title “Son of God”. Generally speaking, most Christians are aware that Jesus has the title “Son of God”. However, from my experience, most Christians do *not* usually refer to Jesus by that title. Instead, most Christians simply refer to Jesus as “God” – partially because of the confusion over the title of “Lord” (as mentioned above).

Another reason why usage of the “Son of God” title is relatively rare is because of the Trinity doctrine. Basically, the Trinity states that there is just one God; but that He exists as three co-equal and co-eternal “persons”: “God the Father”, “God the Son”, and “God the Holy Spirit”.

As a result, people who are schooled in the Trinity tend to *avoid* the Scriptural title of “Son of God” for Jesus; instead, they reverse that title to “God the Son”! Note that the phrase “God the Son” does **not appear anywhere** in Scripture...

The title of Jesus that does appear in Scripture is the “Son of God”, so let’s concentrate on that title. So – what, **exactly**, does Scripture *mean*, when it states that Jesus is the Son of God? Fortunately, Scripture explicitly defines what the title “Son of God” means, in reference to Jesus. Take a look at this passage:

Luke 1:26-35 (ESV):

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s

name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, **you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.** ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; **therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.**

A succinct "synopsis" of the above passage is as follows:

- The angel Gabriel told Mary that God will cause her to **conceive** – in other words, that He will cause one of her eggs to become fertilized.

- Therefore, the resulting child – Jesus – will be called the **Son of God**.

In other words, God *caused* Mary to become pregnant with Jesus – and **as a result**, Jesus is called the **Son of God**. This concept is quite simple – and yet, most mainstream Christians reject it out of hand. Needless to say, I put more trust in what the angel Gabriel tells us, than in the speculation of human theologians.

So, from what I can see, the reason why Jesus is given the title "Son of God" is as follows: *God caused Jesus' mother to become pregnant with him.*

Note that a much more detailed discussion about the title "Son of God" can be found at [this link](#).

Conclusion

In a few cases in the past, people have asked me *who, exactly*, that I think that Jesus is. In that type of situation, it is rather tempting to say things like: "Well, he certainly is not the 'second person of the Trinity'". However, that type of response does not really serve anyone's ends – i.e., it does not prompt anyone to try to research – for themselves – the identity of our Messiah.

Instead, it occurs to me that an appropriate response to that type of question would be as follows:

"I believe that Jesus is *exactly* who the apostles told us he was. For example, I believe – as the apostle Peter said – that Jesus is the **Christ** – the **Son of** the living God. In addition, I believe – as Peter told us – that God has **made** Jesus our Lord".

That type of response would hopefully allow the questioner to do his or her own research. After all, since none of us is omniscient, the best that we can hope for is that people will approach this issue with an open mind, right?